

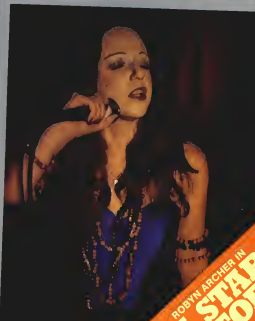
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THE
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Theatre Australia

Adelaide Festival reviewed
Evita!

Video and theatre
The new JCW



ROBYN ARCHER IN
**A STAR
IS TORN**

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
PREMIERE SEASON 1980

THE SUNDAY SOUTH 1980 FEB-JAN
 CLOSE OF PLAY 1981 FEB-MARCH
 NO KINGS, NO JACK 1981 APRIL
 THE BETTER MAN 1981 MAY
 AND TAKES IT ON THE ROAD 1981 JUNE
 CYRANO DE BERGERAC 1981 JULY
 WIFE OF WINDSOR 1981 AUG
 THE PRECIOUS WOMAN 1981 SEP

Theatre Australia

MAY 1990, VOLUME 4, NO. 18

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SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

DIRECTOR: GRAEME MURPHY

1980 SEASON

Graeme Murphy's
Daphnis and Chloë (Premiere)
Designs: Kristian Fredrikson

Viridian (Premiere)

Sheherazade
Designs: Kristian Fredrikson

Graeme Murphy's
Rumours - a trilogy
Designs: Alan Clarkfield

Bary Moreland's *Dialogues*

Joseph Boaglo's *Animus*

Paul Sculbar's *Interiors*



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COMMENT

ADELAIDE'S HARTYBOM OF ST CHRISTOPHER

In a report on the Adelaide Festival in the London *Observer* the warning is given "that the best talent will no longer risk coming here". Peter Hommings, Anna Woodman and now Christopher Hunt are cited as the most recent victims.

Jim Sharman had already been announced as Director of the 1982 Festival when this one went ahead — "to end press speculation" and Kevin Eadie, General Manager of the Festival Centre Trust. "The Board and Trustees had known for a year of my resignation," Hunt told me. "I initiated it...they quickly enough agreed."

Yet most of the problems, as *The Observer* points out, have to do with the "boards of local laymen...usually amateurs who want the most talented directors but will not let them work without interference." What has filtered through from the "bureaucracy" that Hunt is moody and a bad financial manager.

The first charge he admits, "I got very short-tempered indeed with incompetence." The line of his temper has been shortened too by overwork. This is the first (and it looks like the last) time the Festival has been organised all from the work of the Festival Centre Trust, having lost the plan which afforded "glamour and personal satisfaction, those in the trust were understandably resentful", and *Artsy* and *Exile* to some extent came into the picture to compensate Trust personnel who should have been available just when "confronted the whole situation".

That he has been accused of poor financial management infuriates Hunt as a professional administrator. Largely he believes that areas from waiting all the hidden costs dragged out into the light — thereby identifying the board who use the balance sheets apparently rose from \$800,000 to \$1,500,000. Hunt claims that he was never set a proper budget but established a programme of events that found the money to finance it.

"My philosophy is to devise systems where money serves the arts rather than fitting the arts into an accountant's convenient pigeon hole and pattern. I would have taken more risks with this Festival."

Even though gigantic (because fully revealed) sums have been involved Hunt's philosophy and practice looks set to be fully vindicated in the outcome.

To prove an final satisfaction that what does seem certain is that on a venture of this scale we have got made a \$40,000

margin of break even — \$10,000 on the side. "He is staying in Adelaide for the final accounting to be completed for four time "the interests of one or two people but the Festival should look less successful than it was" should prove.

The major success Hunt cites as the amount of industries on the Festival has done this year, and particularly in bringing out Brock's company and mounting *Death* at Femina.

"The one shows that a style which breaks with any convention can work," and the other "that in a provincial city it is possible to produce opera to the highest international standards and there is no alternate reason to accept anything less."

His sadness is that he had too little time to find the wrong talent of Australia and which the system provides no opportunities for. Jim Sharman, he believes, will be in a better position to do this and welcome the appointment.

He wouldn't too at the extent of acidity there has been "Maybe one could have achieved nearly as much by offending fewer people. I do wish the outcome had been just a bit more exceptional. It would have justified being that. Unwise...nevertheless it's been a good and enjoyable Festival for the people and I'm not disappointed."

Hunt, despite misreportage, tired and even antagonistic boards, few of the promised staff and enormous overwork, feels no racism at what has happened. His concern for Australia is if anything increased by the experience — not being able to do more for local art is his major regret in leaving.

He was a good festival director. Long live Jim Sharman.



Robert Page, Editor

Theatre Australia

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I N F O

Season Two...The State Theatre Company of SA has announced its plans for the latter half of this year, following the departure of Colin George and his succession by Kevin Palmer and Nick Enright.

Their Australian plays will be Dorothy Hewson's *Man From Muckinup* and Barry Oakley's *The Ship's Whisk*, both to be directed by Kevin Palmer. He will also be responsible for the production of Orson's *White The Butler Saw* which follows the Hewson and starts in September. John Tucker will be coming in to

direct *Boyz* by Marlon Sherman, in October.

Nick Enright will be directing Turgenev's *A Month In The Country* at the Playhouse in November, but he is also taking the initiative for a new "alternative" season that the Company is staging at Theatre 62 in Hilton. Coincidentally this is where the SATC staged its very first production, Max Frisch's *Andorra* in 1965. The two play season at Theatre 62 consists of Shakespeare's *Pericles* and *Troilus* by Stephen Sewall.



Nick Enright

Hamlet in Malaysia... One-time Theatre Australia writer, Helen van der Poorten, is nearing the end of a three year stint as theatre lecturer in Penang, Malaysia. Having done since her arrival there Bahasa Malaysia productions of Minkoma, Beckett and local Malay plays, she recently embarked on a make or break production of *Hamlet* — the first Shakespeare ever to be done in Malaysia's national language.

Predictably the production, which opened at Penang's Fort Cornwallis then toured to Malacca, Johor and Kuala Lumpur, brought headlines and controversy in the press of Malaysia and Singapore. But Helen feels the sceptics were generally confounded. In not one review was there objections to the way the play translated into Malay. Likewise, the use of Kabuki for the play scene and stylised, masked figures for the ghost (six of them) was accepted.

The production brought to the attention of West



Musa Maran as Hamlet. Photo: Robert C. Cook.

Malaysian audiences the talents of Sabahan actor Musa Maran as Hamlet. His highly controlled performance may have led some critics to suspect the insidious influence of a foreign director.

At the time of writing Radio Television plans to make a feature series of *Hamlet*, but the production may be threatened by some militant objections by Penang students who consider the production

anti-national and anti-religious. The costume design in a variety of reds have also come under attack as being in conflict with the concept of "national culture", a term not widely understood by Malaysians.



John Denum

More Than A Sentimental Bloke... John Denum's tragicomic account of the life and work of one of Australia's great literary figures, C J Dennis, is returning to Sydney this month for a season at the Seymour Centre. It has already played Sydney during January this year for the Festival, and then moved on to a very successful season in Melbourne.

In *More Than A Sentimental Bloke* Denum recounts those famous C J Dennis characters, Ginger Mick, Digger Smith, Dorcas and of course the

Sentimental Bloke himself. John Denum's interest in the poet was heightened when he was chosen to play Dennis in an ABC dramatization of the writer's life produced to mark the centenary of his birth. His physical likeness to Dennis is marked, and as a result of working in this series, Denum felt there was something which had to be said, that C J Dennis had been too long ignored as a fine Australian poet and had been imprisoned too long by his most successful creation, *The Sentimental Bloke*, to the exclusion of his other work.

New Theatre Trust Director ... Terry Vaughan has resigned as Director of the Canberra Theatre Trust after fifteen years and will be succeeded in June by former BBC Television director, Christopher Bedloe.

Terry Vaughan said that "after fifteen years (fifteen years!) in one spot I felt I had to move on to fresh fields, preferably back in the production/musical direction arena. Not being a public servant I have to continue earning a crust so if anyone is looking for an MC who can tap dance, arrange SM, publicity/piano or script writer/director/chief box office, I'll be around."

Christopher Bedloe has only recently come to

Australia after sixteen years on the production staff of BBC TV. In 1962 he was stage manager of the Marmad Theatre and the following year moved into television as a script writer and director for children's programmes. He is the co-author of a musical version of *A Christmas Carol* and in recent years he produced and directed *Merric England*, *Carmen* and *Nabucco* for the Guildford Opera Company, of which he was also the Administrator.

Bedloe's last assignment led to a three month stay in Australia in 1979 with Dr David Bellamy to make a five part TV film series on the botany of Australia, which will be seen here later this year.

Brecht in Canberra... It seems 1980 is the year of *The Threepence Opera*. It has only recently finished a run at the TN Company, Brisbane; Newcastle is to see it late this year and Canberra Opera's production opened at the Playhouse on April 30th for a two-week run.

John Tasker will be directing, he comments that "Usually *The Threepence Opera* is performed by theatre companies and it is a pity for an opera company to tackle it as it is, after all, a play with songs. For our audience there will be one distinct advantage as the music, under the general direction of Dr Donald Hollier, will be given more than usual respect."

"For the cast I have gone outside the ranks of Canberra Opera singers as there are a number of singer/actors here who have had considerable experience in cabaret, vaudeville, music

hall and nightclub."

In the cast are Hec McMillan, Doug Williams, Tamara Ross, Mildred Travers and Elizabeth Lord. Original set designs are by James Redwood.

"During the season there will be a rather large exhibition on Brecht in the Playhouse. The East German Consulate has supplied photos, posters, placards of Berlin and its theatre and many of Brecht at rehearsal. NIDA, Melbourne Theatre company, The Twelfth Night theatre and Nimrod are supplying photos of their Brecht productions, the Melbourne Theatre Company supplying costumes and designs as well. We will be playing music of Kurt Weill at exhibition times and hopefully some films on Brecht. The exhibition won't cost even threepence; it is free, part of Canberra Opera's community programme."



John Tasker

I N F O



Jennifer Hagan stars in *Clouds*

Clouds at Nimrod... English playwright Michael Frayn's comedy *Clouds*, has come to Nimrod after highly successful seasons at Hampstead and at the Duke Of York's Theatre, where it starred Tom Courtenay and Felicity Kendal. In the Sydney season these roles are played by Paul Brannan, straight after his role as Goya's son in *The House Of The Dead*, and Jennifer Hagan who has just finished the season of the STC's *Close Of Play*.

The scene is Cuba, where two British representatives from rival Sunday colour magazines find themselves thrown together on a press assignment. On their hilarious tour of official towns, pig farms and

broiler factories they are accompanied by an American academic ethnologist (Max Gillies), a Cuban guide/interpreter called Angel (John McTernan) and a cheerfully speechless black chauffeur played by Bob Maza, last seen in *Buller's House*.

Clouds will be Neil Armfield's first Upstairs production. He has already gained a strong reputation for his direction of the successful *Downstairs* plays *Upstairs Downstairs* at the *Barrow of the World* and *Transit*. Nimrod has Eamon D'Arcy designing, who has recently returned from England after winning the 1979 London Sainsbury Scholarship and designing for the Royal Court.

Puppets Don't Pay... On the evening of March 10, less than three months into its tenth anniversary year, the Tasmania Puppet Theatre quietly announced it was going into voluntary liquidation and effectively died.

Its new production *Kulberr*, due to open the following Monday in Hobart, was cancelled, although bookings were heavy. Ironically, *Kulberr* was a tale about the "last" Tasmanian tiger. The final lines of the tiger's farewell song in the production now seem something of a prescient chorus: "But our kind of life — it just doesn't pay."

Because, although the decision came as a shock to all, including creator and driving force behind the theatre, artistic director, Peter Wilson, financial problems had plagued the company since 1976 when it

bought 41 Salamanca Place for its headquarters out of general grant funds. The building, a dilapidated but basically sound Georgian warehouse, was developed into the company's workshop, offices, gallery, theatre and kitchen. This took time. Meanwhile, an annual mortgage payment of \$10,000 had to be found. Then, prohibitive headland fire regulations, introduced last year, closed the building's theatre. The complete "complex" at 41 Salamanca Place never had time to be fully capitalised upon.

Informed of an estimated operating deficit of \$20,000-\$40,000 for 1980, the Theatre's board approached the state government, found no money forthcoming and closed the company. Executive Officer for the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board Jon Fogarty said "There was no way out. There was just no money

available and therefore no alternative action for the board to take."

Some people feel more public warning regarding the financial crisis could have been given so that a fund-raising campaign could have been attempted. But these are hindsight "could-be's". The Tasmanian Puppet Theatre no longer exists and it's very much Tasmania's loss. A

company that develops a ten year long tradition, that encompasses a unique blend of educational and artistic objectives, and earns an enviable national and international reputation in puppetry, whilst continuing to develop and direct programmes for its home audience, is rare anywhere in Australia. And now extinct in Tasmania.

Peter Wilson and puppets





Ron Rodger



Stephen Agnew

MTC Trainee Directors...The Melbourne Theatre Company has this year introduced a training programme to give young directors the opportunity to experience at first hand over a number of productions, the working style of a large-scale professional theatre company.

During the year the two Assistant Directors will be assigned to work with directors on major productions at Russell Street, the Athenaeum and Athenaeum 2. They will also assist in the presentation of School's Days, the Sunday Afternoon Readings For Playwrights and have with various production and administrative departments.

The two trainees for 1980 are Ron Rodger and Stephen Agnew. Both are NIDA graduates, Ron Rodger from the acting and Stephen Agnew from the

directing course and both have subsequently worked as actors.

Rodger is from Queensland originally and started off at Twelfth Night, since then he has worked with Rex Cranphorn at Jane Street, with the MTC's TIE team, at the Q Theatre and until the end of last year was directing for the Stage Company in Adelaide.

Agnew is originally a Western Australian and worked with the National in Perth for a year as a contract actor. In 1969 he established a semi-professional company, Colony Productions which specialised in regular presentations of new Australian and overseas plays. In '72 Stephen worked and studied for a year in London and spent some time studying film at the WA Institute of Technology, before going to work for Twelfth Night for a year.

Now For The Programme...The hand-picked Ensemble that is providing the new blood to revitalise the APG has just got its new season underway, in spite of losing two members during the months between appointment and production.

The programme they have chosen is a full and demanding one, centred on new work by John Romeril, Thomas Kennedy and Stephen Sewell, a group devised show and a couple of short plays written by Ensemble members, plus two works previously performed in Melbourne, Witkiewicz's *The Two Headed Calf* and Mayakovsky's *Myself Boogie*.

The season has just opened with a show, named at the time of writing, using musical forms to examine the political and social realities of the work ethic in Australia. It will be followed in June by *The Two Headed Calf*, which was written by Witkiewicz after his visit to Australia and New Zealand in 1914 when he accompanied the Polish anthropologist Malinowski on one of his early expeditions. It depicts the clash of cultures encountered by a young European in

the Antipodes.

In July the Ensemble will be working on a portable show with John Romeril, which "pokes the finger at the coming elections" and will probably play at campuses, schools and factories. September will see the production of a new work by Thomas Kennedy — described as a "well researched fiction that asserts the impossible, that organised crime, big business and politics are intimately connected at the highest levels."

Welcome *Angry World* by Stephen Sewell, who will be APG Writer-In-Residence during September and October this year, will be staged in November. Unlike his first play, *Traitors*, *WRW* is set in contemporary Australia and examines the dislocation of a middle class family on the death of a daughter.

A revolutionary pantomime based on Mayakovsky's *The Mystery Boogie*, will complete the season in December. This extravaganza will involve at least two theatres and an enormous cast in a chronicle of the history of industrial labour.

The APG Ensemble



Townsville Civic Theatre is about to get its 1980 Summerstock programme off the ground. It starts on May 13 with Hibbard's *A Toast To Mithra*, followed up with the Department (Williamson) in August and then there will be a production of *How Could You Believe Me...*, the Australian adaptation of Golden's *Service Of Two Masters*. These three pieces will be directed by

Queenslander Rod Woster, and each of them will only run for three performances.

There will be one more production in the programme, Bryan Nason will be directing *The Tempest* for Townsville.

In January this year TCT staged a full scale production of *My Fair Lady* which played to over 11,000 people in fourteen performances and took \$35,000 at the box office.

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



by Norman Kennedy

Sydney Greenaway is delighted that the stars of *Enna*, the conflict-minimal yet staged in Australia, are "graduates" of their theatre. In this \$1,000,000 production, which opened at the Adelaide Festival Centre on April 30, Peter Carroll plays Peter and Jennifer Murphy the anonymous heroines. Peter's first appearance was at the Gaiety Theatre in 1968, in a role he took over at short notice at a minute's performance of *Lady Precious Sings*. Jennifer Dorel, as she then was, played *Jane in Pride and Prejudice* in 1975. And Steve Murphy, now Jennifer's husband and manager, wrote the music for Greenaway's special *Murphy* year offering, *Alfreds*, in 1978.

By the time you read this, we should be enjoying a visit by five members of the Playwrights Guild of Canada, including a similar successful tour of the UK last November. Subject to approval by the Canadian Department of External Affairs in Ottawa, they're due here on May 3. Gaiety vice president Paddy Campbell briefly advised of several plays and three musicals, now here in March to make the arrangements. The visitors will be at the Australian National Playwrights Conference in Canberra from May 4, and will also "perform" in Melbourne and Sydney, probably with Hoopla and the

Nimrod respectively. All are former actors and their show involves readings of scenes from their own plays and other Canadian works. Aim of the trip is to gain exposure for Canadian writers and for exchange of ideas. The team had not been named at the time of writing, but among the possibilities were paid chorists Sheldon Brown, Gwen Pharis-Greenwood regarded as the deacon of Canadian playwrights, George Riggs, who wrote *The Emancipation of Alvin Karp* and also W B Mitchell, Chas Brooks, Carol Rubin and Erica Ritter.

It's great to see Australian playwrights at last breaking out of their metropolitan bond, but aren't they rather overdoing the biographical bit? In recent months we've had plays about composers Tony Hancock and Stan Laurel, actor George Cagney, writer Henry Lawson, D H Lawrence and Joseph Conrad, revolutionaries Ruffalo Carbone and W J Chastler, pianos Van Gogh and Francisco Goya!

There's a similar tendency, both here and overseas, to present revue-type shows featuring the songs and prominent composers and lyricists. It has sparked a legal battle in Los Angeles, where a company staged a show called *Let's Call The Whole Thing Gershwin*. As music is the differentiation between "grand rights", which involve the use of songs in a full-scale production of a book show, and "small rights", the presentation of a song or songs out of context, as in a night club act. Ira Gershwin, now 83 and sole owner of the Gershwins' "grand rights", obtained an injunction preventing the show from April 30 pending the outcome of a trial.

After the critical backlash, Alex Baze's new play, *Big Alvin*, suffered in Adelaide. It will be interesting to see whether the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust goes ahead with plans to take the show on tour.

I wonder what British comedian *Book Night* has against Sydney. He's here again for a three months Melbourne season of *Star Turn Day* and *Think of England*, but will resolutely refuse to

bring the show into Sydney. Fellow-Brit John Inman was asked at his press conference if he knew why "I don't, but I'll ask him," he said. "I'll be playing Melbourne at the same time."

Inman, who toured the British provinces as *Pygmalion* Tour some six years ago, was asked whether *Bill Robertson*, directing this Australian production, was relying on the actor's earlier experience. "Not at all," he said. "He's an excellent and inventive director, but he does let me keep in him that have worked for me before." Asked why the later series of *Are You Being Served?* had become snappy and suggestive, Inman said: "Well, television has changed greatly in eight years and viewers have come to expect a broader and more permissive line of comedy." From here, Inman goes back to his home town of Blackpool for a fifteen-weeks summer season in revue, then will appear in his usual Christmas pantomime.

At the time of writing, there have been no bidders for Fyfield, the legendary home of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, now on the market for a mere \$80,000,000.

The Robert Sledge organisation has finally posted closing notices for *Jesus Christ Superstar* at London's Palace Theatre. It holds on August 23, by when it will have played 3,357 performances to clock its tale as Britain's longest-running musical.

Meanwhile John Michael Tebbel, librettist and director of that other Jesus musical, *Godspell*, has been served with a multi-million dollar suit by a former lieutenant, Richard Hamann, on the grounds that he persuaded a reluctant Tebbel to bring the show into New York, for which he wants a share of the profits.

A colossus in *Flower*, reported as "lasting" the singing by fifty New York residents of a two-hour concert version of Richard Wagner's whole *Ring* cycle. To which the editor added a footnote: "Anna Russell does the same thing."

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SPOTLIGHT

The New JCW

Robert Ginn, successor to
Kenn Brodzick, interviewed
by Raymond Stanley

Kenn Brodzick's successor as managing director of J C Williamson Productions Ltd from May 8 is Robert Ginn, the company's executive director, who has been groomed for the position. Pleasant and easy to talk to, Ginn is approaching thirty seven, but looks younger.

The younger Ginn having no desire to act, went into the teaching profession, but was interested in theatre. He met Brodzick at a party at a time the entrepreneur (then head of Actor Services) was seeking someone to replace his general manager, Malcolm Cooke. Cooke who had a background of teaching and, seeing the transfer to theatre management had worked so well in his case, Brodzick thought history could well repeat itself.

It did and Ginn remained with Actor three or four years, then moved to New York as singer Don McLean's touring manager. When the new J C Williamson Productions was formed in 1976, Ginn returned to join the company.

Like Brodzick he claims to be a fanatical, saying it is part of his personal philosophy. He acknowledges his luck at being able to observe Brodzick at close quarters, and see how he operates. It is natural to assume he will model himself on his mentor.

"I think Kenn Brodzick's retirement is going to be a great loss" says Ginn, "not only to the company but to theatre in Australia. His experience, his ability, his talent is unequalled and I would hope that, from working with him over these years, some of that will come in my direction."

"One thing I'm happy about is that

he will remain as chairman of the company, and will be a consultant to it. I should say also I believe he's personally making the correct decision to retire, because he has worked long and hard and often against huge odds, but he's had an enormous success rate. The commercial theatre throughout the world is becoming increasingly difficult in which to survive and I think he's done his share and that, as he says, he doesn't want to die in business — he wants to enjoy this time of his life."

Brodzick thinks Ginn probably will be more experimental than he has been in certain ways, and this may pay off.

"It's possibly a correct assumption," admits Ginn, "not because of any wish on my part to be experimental, but I think commercial theatre is more severely threatened now than it has ever been. And I think experimentation out of necessity is going to be a course we'll be inclined to take." Also, Ginn considers it inevitable that, within a few years, some form of outside money will be necessary to support commercial theatre. "I'm not sure of the best source of this money, nor of how it should be provided, but would envisage it would either be in the form of sponsorship or monies on a risk-sharing profit-taking basis, possibly from Government sources as well as other areas of private enterprise. But as distinct from direct annual grants."

JCWs will continue under Ginn's regime to co-produce attractions with other managements. Obtaining venues he sees as one of the problems he will have to face.

"It always has been a problem, particularly to those companies who don't own or control their own theatres. With the increasing activity of both the subsidised companies and other producers in these theatre monies, there is a definite problem getting venues, and a run of them to

allow a play to tour."

Is he optimistic about the future of commercial theatre in Australia?

"Guarded optimism. I think we face a greatly increasing number of problems. I have already touched upon subsidies. Costs are increasing alarmingly — almost on a monthly basis. We're a very labour-intensive industry and many of our costs are related to that, so that it's very easy to spend \$150,000 just to get a play on and the possibility of recovering this money is becoming less as we go on."

"We've also got the problem of ticket prices in that they are unrealistic. I suppose we have to blame ourselves, we've deliberately kept them down over the years. Our top admission price for *Amor* was \$11.90 — and on Broadway the revival of *Camelot*, I believe, will have a top of \$30."

Basically Ginn visualises operating in much the same way as Brodzick has done so successfully over the past thirty-odd years, but thinks it may be necessary to make some changes.

"We will be moving more into the area of concert attractions — primarily popular attractions. We've already started that by working with Gerry Van Egmond with *The Village People* tour."

Like Brodzick Ginn is very concerned at the encroachment of subsidised bodies in what has been traditionally the area of commercial theatre.

"I don't believe it's fair competition, because those people are receiving public monies which I think should be directed to areas that are in need of public money to support presentation of classics, development of Australian product and areas like that, where there is no need for commitment or operation of subsidised bodies into an area that's more than adequately served by us and other companies. I don't see that it's right."

Theatre in the making

by Terence Clarke

Earlier this year the Australian National Playwrights Conference sent a questionnaire to all those writers — some seventy — whose plays have been read or workshopped in the seven years of its existence. We don't have the address of some, and others have moved; we would like to hear from any writer who should have heard from us and hasn't. Of the forty or so respondents a substantial majority stated that attendance at the Conference had marked the beginning of a career of professional writing for theatre, film radio, and TV. (We got a couple of well-earned brackets, too.) This news is encouraging indeed, for the main purpose of ANPC is to discover and develop Australian playwrights, and the fact that, say, half of those writers launched by ANPC are still active and under way is its long-term justification.

Of the 123 plays submitted and read by the Playreading Committee of twelve (each play has been read by at least three, and most by four, readers — a few by more), six have been chosen for workshopping at the 1980 Conference. Backed by Janis Balodis (Queensland), *Furious Lovers* by Brian Bonkowski (South Australia), *The Choir* by Enrol Bray (NSW), *The Men in Their Lives* by Peggy Cairns (NSW), *The Conchella Syndrome* by Collette Cronin (Queensland), and *Sideways Dead* by Ken Stone (NSW). Two of the authors are actors, one is a director, one an experienced playwright, and one a NIDA student. This connection with theatre (the sixth is post-parturient lemming) is a happy accident. Few Australian playwrights have come from theatre as in the fact that only one play is set in a suburban living-room, and that none of them is about mum, dad, and the kids. About the only thing the six plays have in common is strong, vital, often exciting, writing for theatre.

This quality marked about a quarter of this year's plays, which made the job of selecting the half-dozen plays to be



Terence Clarke, Artistic Director of the 1980 Playwrights Conference

given rehearsed readings pleasantly difficult. Another director might have chosen quite differently with no lowering of standard, for at least another twelve writers show conspicuous promise. They are left languishing, most regrettably, we need a full-time organisation that can afford to provide the services of directors to work over a period of time with inexperienced playwrights.

The success of the Conference depends upon the people present: the playwrights, the poets, the professional engaged, and the observers. The overseas guests invited this year were David Hare and a leading Canadian playwright whose naming awaits official confirmation. We heard at the tail-end of March that David Hare is overcommitted and has had to withdraw, with regret, at the time of writing we are negotiating for another English playwright, Michael Cove, by courtesy of the Film and

Television School, will be present for the first three days; his experience in theatre, film, and TV, will be put to good account in the informal writers' discussion groups which Mick Rodger introduced so successfully last year.

Working on a new play is always exciting, at the Conference, without the pressure of a production deadline at the end, one can give one's full attention to the play itself. Hence the impressive list of theatre professionals who have worked at the Conference, which includes many of the most talented people in the country: it can't be the money (average), the hours (exhaustingly long), or the food (institutional) that draws them. This year we have Neil Armfield, David Atkins, Alan Ayckbourn, Pat Bishop, Ron Blair, Maggie Blinn, Anne Byrne, Jennifer Clarr, Kery Dwyer, Jon Ewan, Alexander Hay, Chris Hayward, Julie McGregor, Scott McGregor, Elaine Mangan, Robin Ramsay, Ron Rodger, Tony Sheldon, Joan Suleary, and David Sumpster. And Alima de Groot and David Allen — particularly pleasing as both these writers have had plays workshopped by ANPC. Not least, our chairman, David Williamson, will be there (in between London seasons of *The Club* and *Travelling North*).

Although the 1980 Conference, again in Canberra, will be run along much the same lines as before, there will be some innovations. For some years we have felt the need available at Burton Hall, where we shall again be in residence, inadequate; this year most of our activities will be at ANU's Arts Centre, opened in mid-1979, which has much more space. The Centre is only a short walk from Burton Hall. I am planning fewer formal seminars this year, allowing more time for workshopping of the plays and for discussion groups. One of the drawbacks of the Conference is that some writers have found rearing during the Conference difficult, and major structural changes virtually impossible. The fact that the workshop plays were selected by early March has allowed playwright and director to get together and make changes to the script, if necessary.

VIDEO



EVITA

AND THE ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST

"The Talk of London" "The Toast of Broadway". "A million dollar spectacular". "The biggest musical ever mounted" — just some of the epithets being used to market *Evita*, apparently simply the most successful musical ever. And it is being produced not by the giants of commercial entertainment, Edgley's or J C Williamson's, or even Malcolm Cooke, AGC Parade or Paul Darity, but by the State subsidised

body that administers a single complex in South Australia, the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust.

This might be partly explained by the fact that *Evita*'s international producer, Robert Stigwood, is himself a South Australian — his mother still lives in Adelaide — and for personal reasons he was keen for the show to open in that State, but he also made it known that he was particularly interested in it being entrepreneurial

by the AFCT, in preference to the commercial operators or the Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust has been in existence for seven years, first set up as a statutory body to administer the Festival Centre complex, it moved into production when it found that filling the theatres over the Christmas period could not be done just by importing attractions from overseas. With the same

personnel also working on the Festival staff every two years, buying and selling large numbers of productions, AFCT quickly acquired the skills to become one of the most influential entrepreneurs in the country.

Working within the definition of their role as promoting theatre in South Australia, as a subsidised body they have invested in big commercial touring productions in order to be able to insist that they come to Adelaide. With J C Williamson's, AFCT have had phenomenal successes on both *Dracula* and *Annie*.

"Adelaide saved *Dracula*", claims General Manager Kevin Earle, and indeed after a very shaky season in

advertising, for *Annie* had produced results long before first night. By the end of March, a month before opening, the entire first night and every party booking for the entire six and a half week Adelaide season had been sold.

This is not the first tour that will take AFCT off their home ground, but one of the earliest they did was the ill-fated *Livermore Ned Kelly*, which lost its producers around \$300,000. But they are quite confident with *Annie*, because as part of the shared backing, the Michael Edgley publicity machine will be handling promotion in the other States.

Kevin Earle has very decided views

understanding that percentages would be offered to Brodsky and Edgley."

Annie is the first production mounted by the AFCT that isn't there to fill a Christmas hiatus. No one can quite put their finger on what makes this show the phenomenal success it is, but Earle is confident it will be as big or bigger than *Superstar* — "It has that sort of feel to it, and probably appeals to a wider market."

"It really is a superstar show, it has always started unknowns because it's so big that it can make its own stars. It has a number one hit song, 'Don't Cry For Me Argentina', and *Annie* didn't have that. It's been a smash hit in both London and New York, and it's most unusual for both cities to accept something so readily, it's rare too to get something over here so soon after its West End and Broadway openings."

The Adelaide production will be an exact reproduction of the London set-up. Shaun Glavin who assisted on the London set has been working on the Adelaide one for the past nine months, along with the set construction manager of the State Theatre Company. It includes an enormous movie screen to fill the back wall of the theatre, and a vast scaffolding construction to move the screen up and downstage, and provide *Annie's* balcony. When it opens interstate the production will be transported by semi-trailers — like the Australian Opera tour, except they've never made the journey from Adelaide to Perth and then back to Melbourne.

Unlike commercial entrepreneurs or the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the AFCT will not necessarily show a huge profit from *Annie*, even if, as everything suggests, the show is an enormous success. Their entrepreneurial activities do not receive a fixed amount of funding but simply get topped up, the extent depending on their profits or losses, to \$250,000 per year. Whatever money they make on *Annie*, their Government grant will be reduced by that amount, "It's not as if the money's going to waste" says Kevin Earle.

"If we did make a profit we could go to the Government and say we'd like to earmark some of that money to risk on an all Australian production, like *Ned Kelly*." Then adds, "It would depend on the government of the day whether they would let us."



Sydney, the promotion campaign of the Festival Centre attracted South Australian crowds who paid a quarter of a million dollars to see the show. Likewise *Annie* was flagging towards the end of its Sydney run and Williamson's would have been happy to end the season there, but because of the AFCT's percentage Kevin Earle insisted that it keep its Adelaide slot, and it did record business, grossing around \$650,000 for its backers.

The skill of the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust lies in their marketing ability. "We know our city and we know how to promote in our city," says Earle, and indeed their saturation

as to the position of a subsidised entrepreneur working in the commercial field. "We are not there to work against commercial entrepreneurs, but to work with them. I don't think it is right for a body with Government funds to compete with what they are doing — in some cases we could offer far more money than they could. In the first instance we were bidding for the rights of *Annie*, but when we found out that we were bidding against Michael Edgley we pulled out straight away and put money into his production. Likewise when I went to London to negotiate with Sugwood for *Annie* there was an

PETER BROOK IN AUSTRALIA

By Jerry Luxembourg

Undoubtedly, Christopher Hunt's masterstroke as Artistic Director of the 1980 Adelaide Festival was to cap an extraordinarily rich and varied programme with the presentation of the Centre for International Theatre Company season in Austey's Hill Quarry.

When the CICT tour away from their home theatre in Paris — the Bouffes du Nord — they brief host managements to find them an "empty space" with an interesting wall in front of which to perform.

At first the CICT showed more interest in all in performing outside. However, the dearth of suitable indoor spaces in Adelaide (exhaustive research was done) forced the festival to look outside. A damned quarry was the inspired suggestion of Festival operations co-ordinator Rob Brookman and the search started for the right one. Brook was hesitant about his company performing in a grandiose monument which might overwhelm the players. The right quarry had to have good sound insulation from archaic noise, a good acoustic, be reasonably accessible to the public and provide a space suitable for the complete repertoire.

The right quarry was found in Austey's Hill and this was turned into a theatre.

The presence of this company in such a remarkable venue gave audiences the exciting adventure of getting to the site, wandering up a beautiful back track to a giant scaffolding grandstand on three sides of an empty space in front of a very interesting wall.

This unique theatre was built with the enthusiastic, generous and sometimes bewildered help of many South Australian public utilities, government agencies and private companies without whose support this remarkable event would not have been possible. At Festival time many such bodies co-operated gladly to provide

services quite outside their normal money making ambit.

When Christopher Hunt approached the CICT and Brook about touring Australia he stipulated that a repertoire of at least three programmes should be brought. The CICT rose to this challenge because it gave them the first opportunity they had ever had to present three such radically different programmes side by side. The material presented in Australia represents the major work of the company over the last five years.

The first programme was pure popular comedy — capricious and delightful — like champagne! The

totally appropriate to the comic form they have evolved for the telling of these two stories.

Unfortunately this programme — because it was promoted as being performed in French — was treated with a degree of circumspection by Australian audiences. It was the only programme not to sell out in each city. This was especially true in Sydney where the remarkably sterile York Theatre at the Seymour Centre was only three fifths full. Melbourne audiences rose to the occasion and almost filled the Teletheatre for this programme. In Melbourne the audience seemed least intimidated by the French language.

The second programme, *The Ik*, was a complete contrast. This play performed in English (and in *Ik*) was the first to sell out in every city. This anthropological documentary is a horror show. It charts the course of observations made by English anthropologist Colin Turnbull during a period when he lived with them. We are shown scenes of moral chaos as a tribal people are progressing alienated from their physical and spiritual environment by white man's laws.

A note for Australian directors: This play was distilled from 14 hours of improvisational material developed by Brook and his actors from Turnbull's book 'The Mountain People'. The result now is one and a quarter hours of chilling detail humanely and empathetically played.

Brook asked for the child actors required for this play to be found in Australia from the local aboriginal community. That was done in South Australia. The day after he arrived Brook and Spanish-African-German actress Miriam Goldschmidt walked into a rehearsal studio to meet twenty aspiring young aboriginal actors and their families. After personal introductions all around they invited the parents to stay and called the children into a circle in the centre of the room. He and Miriam Goldschmidt took the children



Peter Brook talks with Pablo Azpurrá from the French people. Photo: Willemijn

quarry rocked with thunderous laughter and applause as the actors took us on an exciting journey through *L'Es* (The Bone) — a folksy African farce and then the more complex and bizarre *L'Os*.

This programme is unabashed comedy — fast and physical. Although performed in French, key information and humour was interpolated in English. Because of its international membership this company has access to a diffusion of comedy denied to the single language performer. The charm of a French man rendering English correctly, but badly or of an American swapping from his rich St Louis accent in and out of French is extraordinary. It adds a surreal quality



Four Brook celebrates first rehearsal (L to R Adam Stanley, David Bailey) for *The Ik*

through a set of basic theatre games culminating after about one hour with some quite explicit improvisations based on the story of *The Ik*. Four boys were chosen to appear with the CICT in each city.

This play had not been performed for four years. It had a ten days rehearsal in Paris prior to the company's departure to Australia. Yet it was performed with such moving detail and precision that one felt very much in the presence of master artists.

The aboriginal boys fitted in well after three rehearsals. Brook was often asked why use black children? The adult black characters in the play were played by Japanese, English, a German and an African with complete credibility. So why use black children? He explained that to use black children as the Christian missionaries to the tribal people was more confronting and more accurate to the normal debasing process. They had used white kids once and found the image too clothed to be in any way confronting.

The implicit political gesture of using aboriginal children had particular resonances in South Australia where the Pitjantjatjara land rights issue is a constant embarrassment to the current right wing government who seem bent on rescinding all proposed land rights reform tabled by the Durrant Government. It is generally felt that this is being done to maintain legal control of valuable gunfields for the



Marcus Goldschmidt as Merv Chevalier in *The Druggies* in short. Photo: Keith Long.

white multinationals with no consideration for the temporal and spiritual well being for the traditional occupiers of the land.

The urban aboriginal community was well represented in the audiences for *The Ik*. As well the Sydney based collective *Marcus Light Films* who are making a documentary about the CICT visit to Australia arranged for 20 tribe people from Indjilana and Papunya to meet with the company and see the work Brook privately (through a translator) explained the story of *The Ik* to them. Since most of these people understand little English they experienced it visually. Their faces in the crowd progressed from open delight at the plays innocuous beginning of a white man arriving in a tribal village — to creased and graphic recognition of the reality of an

unfolding story not too unlike their own.

Some meetings and song sessions with these people were arranged and this precipitated a visit to the centre by Brook during the week the company were performing in Melbourne.

The last and most newly created work in the repertoire is *The Conference of the Birds*. This highly evolved work is the culmination of several years of thought and adventure for the company it is remarkable playing as we all dream it could be. This parable for the theatre has something special for each member of the audience to take away. It is not so literal as to be totally explicit and not so abstract as to be completely alien. The stories told have resonances for us all. It is a series of moral tales taken from the work of Sufi poet Ma'rufi U-Tair and performed with complete harmony between form and content. It has the type of acoustic musical storytelling form that some pioneering groups have attempted here in the past with relatively little tolerance from critics and audiences. Hopefully the parameters of form available to local artists have now been broadened by this visit.

A cough of bonhomie came with this visit. Bruce Meyers and Miriam Goldschmidt gave us in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney a last night Doybbuk. A Jewish classic play they have honed into a one hour two handed. Each actor undergoes constant character transformations as the story unfolds giving us spell-binding virtuoso work. Bob Lloyd played his one man show *Max / Mave The Pleasure of His Dance* to enthusiastic response at last night Nimrod.

Toshi Touchette dedicated his Festival Plaza procession rituals to the tribal people of Central Australia who he had met that day before falling into his drum kit with high Japanese fervour. Truly a remarkable musician.

Ten presence of this company in Australia has provided the most powerful stimulus to Australian theatre, artists and audiences that we have seen for a long time.

Thank you Adelaide Festival, Australia Council and most especially Christopher Hunt for facilitating this wonderful tour.

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Louisville New Plays Festival

by Irving Wardle

High among the attractions that lured the International Press to Kentucky for the Marsh Festival of New American Plays at the Actors' Theatre of Louisville was a little revue called *The American Project*. Commissioned by the theatre, this consisted of ten sketches on America by a group of culturally-OK, non-Americans, and it promised one civilized outpost in a territory that might otherwise be populated by playwrights with heads growing under their armpits.

As it happens, this show did leave me with the strongest single image I received from the festival's nine productions. The moment occurred in a wryly comic sketch by Arthur Fugard, whose *Disco Topogorystock*, as a literary director splashed by a passing truck, wipes himself clean and then throws the tissue into the audience. "We finished in disgust. We knew that tissue was spotless, and also that it was saturated in filth. The mirror of theatre magic was composed into one gesture."

Otherwise the evening made one flash for other reasons. It consisted of every third hard anti-American stereotype you can think of from dollar-worship to the divorce rate, delivered with long-range contempt by such luminaries as Brian Clark, Alexander Burn, and Wole Soyinka. When you think that most of these stereotypes of the ugly American had played in at Kentucky's expense, you are left gasping, equally at their actors' gallantry in the limitless humanity of a company who would act out these torments while on their homelands.

Now there was a plan to give the ju to the ugly American myth (it is ATL — an outfit that has grown up under fifteen years of the kind of civic care which America usually reserves for celebrities, and which now combines the role of a community house with education to new writing, thus achieving a 95% capacity subscription list. Over the year, new plays account for a third of ATL's output. It also runs an annual new play contest and the festival (now in its fourth year) selected from an estimated 4,000 scripts that pass through the Literary Manager's office. About half the material rejected up for subsequent production elsewhere,



ATL's They're Going To Make It Right by Ken Broadhurst. Photo: David S. Talbot

sometimes piling commercial properties like *The God Game* and Marsha Norman's *Getting Out*. But of the plays I saw, not one had been picked with a promotional eye to Broadway.

The only possible exception was Michael Kaminer's *Tools: A Little Error a Lower East Side Jewish comedy* involving the confusion of generations through the handover of a kosher butcher shop from its traditional proprietor to a go-ahead newcomer. This was originally an excellent one-act play, so which the management persuaded Mr Kaminer to add a second act, wherein sharp parapsychic comedy substitutes into static trash. However, it was also the management who gave Alan Duke the vehicle for *Reveries*, a disorientated portrait of the pre-1944 painter and novelist of the American West and arch-defender of Frontier values against the effete duplicity of the East. (Michael Krive plays him as a Dodge City prederiving round his gun-fettersed living room and haranguing his visitors (as on the flapping paradise of "wild riders and vacant lands." Assembled largely from Remington's own work, the violent political contradictions of the text set a whole genre of modern strings in vibration (for a man this champion of the

cowboy lives in New York).

These two plays were presented respectively in ATL's main auditorium on its studio, the first a 637-seat with a thrust stage, the second on a stage floor with 160 spectators tucked on three sides. Common to both are the resources of a design department that specializes in elaborate scenic building, and if ever a theatre lived up to the slogan "the water leads" it is at ATL's scrupulous translation of its chosen texts into symphonic and tactile. Whether the solemn managerial task, or the "home study" methods of American playwrighting courses, the festival did show a pronounced bias in favour of anecdotal naturalism, from which a fully escaped only in John Polster's *Agents of God: A combined Roman Catholic and psychoanalytic sleuthing comedy* (set in a stoned immaculate conception, the rapidly emerged as a spiritual drama for people who distrust spiritual dramas. And while the central mystery remained unsolved, you can forgive the author anything for the splendid sparring match between the tough woman doctor and the even tougher Woe-cuckling Mother Superior).

In some of the weaker plays there was
(Continued over page)

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a positively embarrassing imbalance between the facile stage action and the detailed craftsmanship that supports it. As, for instance, with Paul Owen's suspenseous three-act play set for Kent Broadhurst's *Thirteen Cents*. To Make a Fighter, a blow-by-blow account of a pre-Christmas working day in the lobby of a New York office building, consisting largely of dripping arrivals from the snow-bound street and gossip about people we never meet.

A better introduction to the work of Jon Jory, ATL's producing director, was Adrian Edling Shurick's *Summer/Summer*, in which the design staff again went to town with a miniature Californian house exterior complete with vintage Pontiac, restored bathroom-tub, and (like author's motto) a television intercom through which a daughter of the house ('I'm a little to everything except plastic') communicates with the family and guests who throng the mechanized barbecue.

Set and play alike reflect the techniques of photo-realism. West Coast superficiality is put on trial through an interplay of surfaces: open relationships, future betrayals, flashes of murderous hostility, incoherent drink, with never a trace of moral judgement. The author leaves her characters to run their own hell like a self-service cafeteria.

Mr Jory's production, unfolding in steadily gathering darkness and animating a company of fourteen so as to direct your eye unflinchingly from one focal point to the next, reaches its climax in an unbroken darkened pause which seems to go on for ever until broken by a single sob.

Good company

by Karl Levent

The theatre companies that populate Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway are the creative bastions of most of what is new and worthwhile in American drama. On any given weekend there must be well over a hundred of these companies competing for an audience.

Largely subsidised by publicised private funding, each company has an individual personality and each has an equally ambitious creative plan. A rollcall of some of the more prominent ones lists as the competing personalities: The Public Theater, La Mama, Manhattan Theatre Club, CSC Repertory, The Negro Ensemble, The Lion Theatre Company, The Performing Garage, Hudson Guild Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, Joan Marcus Repertory, Phoenix Theatre, The Theater of the Open Eye and The Redstone Theatre Company. And there are many more. In the colourful names department my two favourites are The Meat and Potatoes Company and The Inexplicable Ragtime Theatre.

Here I'd like to point out two such companies that are currently standing out from the crowd.

The first is the newly constituted BAM Theatre Company which has begun its first season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. The director of the company is David Jones, former associate director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and it is Mr Jones' intention to create a new major classical repertory ensemble using a committed group of American actors. With this company, it is Mr Jones' ambition to explore and define a specifically American approach to the presentation of classical drama. An ambition indeed.

The reason the company opened with *The Winter's Tale*, Mr Jones has said, was to get the hardest play over first. So the BAM Company has had a baptism of fire and emerged with little singing. With three experienced performers leading, Brian Murray (Leontes), Mario Maradea (Hermione) and Sheila Allen (Paulina), the company attacks the early scenes with



Arrest Theatre of Louisville's *Twelve A Little Later* by Michael Rabin. Photo: David S. Rabin

Jessie Gumpert, Jon Poth, Rosanna Bari and Gary Bear in BAM's *Johnny On A Spot*. Photo: Ken Howard

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Judd Hirsch and Trish Hawken in Talley's Folly. Photo: Garry Goodstein

vigour and command. It is only in the personal scenes later in the play where the younger members of the company display their inexperience. These scenes have about them a quintessential Englishness, and without the aid of a Devon or some other provincial accent, the young Americans are left with nothing to hang the roles on.

Jones' strong directorial hand is very evident and on the whole this is a most creditable beginning. It is, unfortunately, as good if not better than any Shakespearean production presented in New York in recent years.

In *imitating* repertory with *The Whore's Tale* is *Johnny On A Spot*, a 1941 satire larver of American election politics by Charles MacArthur. A little-known comedy about the shenanigans of a disreputable politician seems particularly appropriate in a Presidential campaign year. An American director, Edward Cornish, two engaging young leads in Gary Bayer and Roseanne Barr and a large supporting cast succeed in a play whose quick and jagged American rhythms would elude most other English-speaking actors. At its best it's fast and furious fun — and very American. Come to think of it, this is probably the best of all possible productions the play could receive anywhere in the world.

To complete the season, BAM has the American premiere of Gorky's *Barbarians*, the 1911 *We And She* by Rachel Crosham

and *The Marriage Dancer* (made up of Feydeau's *The Purging* and Brecht's *The Wedding*). The BAM Theater Company is an ambitious dream, but a dream that is well-founded and one whose success could be fundamental to the future of American theatre.

The Circle Repertory Company was founded in 1968 as a not-for-profit educational theatre with a goal to establish an ensemble of actors — actors, directors, playwrights and designers — who would work together "to create a living play". Today the Circle Rep claims to be the only theatre in America which has major playwrights-in-residence creating roles for specific actors. While the Circle's rendering of the classics has often left something to be desired, as a provider of new American plays it is on the first rank.

Circle Rep calls its style "lyric realism" and two of its most significant contributions to American drama Modeloff's *When Five Corners Meet*, *And Rude!* and *The Sea Horse* premiered at the Circle. But the Circle's foremost guidance is Langford Wilson with *The Best Laid Scheme*, *The 1st Of July* and now *Talley's Folly*.

Talley's Folly after a short season down at Sheridan Square is now succeeding on Broadway. The Circle Rep has hit the Big Time and so fortunately has Mr Wilson. *Talley's Folly* is an extended one-act in which a Jewish accountant from St Louis attempts the fast-talking wooing of a blonde Mid-Western Wasp. In this coming together of two troubled persons, Wilson has written a play that is tender yet romantically desperate. The play's weakness has a pattern that robs it of some force, but Wilson's dialogue is impeccable and his economy of writing is admirable.

Judd Hirsch as the accountant is responsible for much of the play's commercial success. (Mr Hirsch stars in a current TV series *Ten* and in a household name). His performance is detailed and masterly, overshadowing Trish Hawken's Sally. There's a wonderful set of derelict Victorian beachhouse (the folly of the title) by John Lee Beatty. The sprightly direction is by Marshall W Mason, the Circle Rep's driving force. He and the company — and Mr Wilson — are very welcome on Broadway.

FILM



by Elizabeth Riddell

Harlequin — lacks class

Harlequin is from the stable that gave us *Parsons*, *Blue Fire*, *Lady Singslow*, *Thru and Thru*. Like its predecessors, it may make some money. And like them, it lacks class.

Unlike them, it lacks movement. The odd cracked window pane and bit of floorboarding occurs too seldom to justify an hour and a half of tedious talk about power which leads only to David Hemmings going off his rocker and Carmen Duncan showing a blade of grass on the bank of a creek while her little son paints his face with mud.

Part of the trouble with *Harlequin* is this child. Whatever the casting director had in mind, what he came up with was this four-year-old (not Mark Spier's look, the poor tag) who looks and acts like a kind of miniature Frank Thring. Even when his hair grows back (or he is fixed with a wig) after he has been rescued from the brink of death by leukemia by the Harlequin himself, little Alex remains the reverse of sexy. Only his mother could prefer to hug him rather than one of the gigantic caddy woolly animals sitting around his nursery.

If you are going into the business of psychobabble in films (as, for instance, in *Conrad*) it has to be done very well and for a good reason. At no time in the story of *Harlequin* is it clear why he takes an interest in Alex, although there is a hint here and there that he wants to obstruct the misadventures of some politicians who are setting up Alex's father, Nick Bass, as a fall guy. Having magically cured Alex, however, *Harlequin* hangs around going on pictures with Alex's mother, Sandra



David Hemmings and Robert Powell in *Harlequin*

When he first takes up the family *Harlequin* assumes the features of a magpie and hangs about on the balcony, but later he simply moves in, accompanied by some strange costumes and a box of make-up.

Where does all this take place? In Perth, according to the skyline and the Bush mansion which is identical with one belonging to a financier whose initials are AB. But the script does not say, "The capital" is referred to, and "the governor". The cast speak in a variety of American, English and dubious Or accents.

The alleviating factor in *Harlequin* is Robert Powell, who plays our hero with a good deal of grace and even a touch of wit. He has the advantage of androgynous good looks. Even the banal lines of the script sound somewhat better than they should when coming from his lips. Which is more than can be said for the efforts of the rest of the cast.

Harlequin was undoubtedly put together on the theory that Australian films will sell overseas if they have overseas actors, in this case David Hemmings,

Powell and Brendon Crawford and are made with as little Australian *barbaric* as possible. A bit of antipodean scenery is okay, but let's stop there. There does not seem much basis for this idea. In any case neither Hemmings nor Crawford will sell a film anywhere any more. With Robert Powell it may be different.

The director of *Harlequin* is Simon Windsor, who must take the blame for the fuzzy preoccupations with telephones and ever-opening and closing doors and meaningless flights of gulls, and for the embarrassing close-ups, especially of Carmen Duncan's gaping mouth as well as for the dragging pace.

Everett de Roche wrote the screenplay, Brian May composed and directed the portentous score, Gary Hansen was director of photography, Conrad Rothman did the special effects (as he did for *Parsons*) and the film was produced by F G Film Productions (William Fayman and Anthony Ginnane) with money from the Australian Film Commission, the Western Australian Film Council, Art Theaters and private investors.

DANCE



By William Shatneridge

Transfigured Night — vehicle for ensemble

by Alan Brinkman

With *Transfigured Night*, his new ballet for the 1988 Adelaide Festival, Jonathan Taylor has returned to lyricism, creating a work of cardiovascular smoothness and emotional intensity, if not yet performed with much emotional warmth. The vigorous flow of Schoenberg's music is reflected in the choreography's ever-moving patterns of swooping turns, runs, swirls, leaps and catches, with never a harsh or jagged movement interrupting the continuous fluency. At times, particularly in the second section, the restlessness fails to conceal that invention has worn thin and the steps have degenerated into padding, but the falling is less obvious here than in, say, Tom Schilling's *Symphony of Youth* for the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet.

Transfigured Night is a vehicle both for the ADT ensemble and the new, vital partnership of Margaret Wilson and Ronald Van den Bergh. These two dancers make light of the most demanding choreography Taylor has ever devised, filled with an extraordinary array of lifts and throws, many of them performed at a speed which successfully prevents the audience perceiving the physical methods by which the effects are achieved. Where is classical ballet the dancers gain (or lose) applause by exhibitionism, in modern dance of this kind such movement is absorbed into the pattern as a whole and there is neither pause nor call for applause. Wilson's

flexibility, accuracy and sheer nerve are allied to a controlling gracefulness and an emotional maturity. Van den Bergh is the modern equivalent of the ideal dancer: noble, elegant, strong, supple and good-looking.

With these two dancers as his centre, Taylor develops several ideas from his first ballet in Australia, *Star's End*, made for Ballet Victoria in 1976. The feeling of weightlessness and the defiance of gravity in the choreography for the women are regular, as are the simple costumes in silky blues, earthy browns and deep greys. By adding a relationship between the men and women, however, Taylor has given his new ballet greater substance. And the heart-catching centricity of some of the movement marks a new point of achievement for both choreographer and dancers. *Transfigured Night* should certainly be taken to Edinburgh when the company goes there later this year.

Symphony, the other new work for the Festival, could just as easily sit at home. A slight piece in which John Nott has performed energetically as Cathy Berberian's vocal collage of comic strip

sounds ("Duch", "Zep", "Zowee" etc), it was remarkable for Nott's quick changes from bassoonist to unison-modulated man to Superman, his posing with a huge Malcolm Fraser-endorsed balloons figure and, on opening night, for the commanding presence and incredible voice of Cathy Berberian herself.

It is doubtful whether *Incubus or Bully Creek* will need another Adelaide showing, even though it was good to see Pamela Beckman's finely drawn interpretation of the leading role. As a three-ballet season its point, but it is made within narrowly defined limits.

The programme was completed by Christopher Bruce's *Labyrinth*, seen here for the first time. Energetic, but expansive and much firmer behind the proscenium arch, it is a work which constantly promises more than it eventually gives. The chunky blocks of movement lack climaxes within themselves and together they do not add up to a coherent work in emotional, intellectual or choreographic terms. It was given an undeniably splendid performance, aided by the silken lighting of William Aiken, but the dancers were working with inferior material.



ADT in Christopher Bruce's *Labyrinth*. Photo: Brenden Lattin

Borovansky Tribute — an artistic success

by William Shoubridge

While it is extremely praiseworthy of the Australian Ballet to be mounting their tribute to Edward Borovansky it strikes me as a shame (they couldn't have meant, last year, a tribute of some sort to Sergei Diaghilev on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death).

Because the fact remains that he was born for the intercontinental stage and talent for organisations that Diaghilev owned, it is doubtful that there would ever have been any Ballet Russes and Colonel de Baud companies or any Borovansky's and by extension, it would have taken a lot longer for the art of dance to have taken any foothold in this country at all.

Elsewhere all over the world last year, companies were mounting new productions of some of those Ballet Russes masterpieces and Marjory herself held a Diaghilev Ballet tribute (in association with the Jeffrey Ballet) in New York. I don't think it would have been the Australian Ballet that much to mount say a couple full programmes in commemoration of one of the greatest artistic parents of all time. A programme of say *Pavane*, *Journeé* and *Shéhérazade* or say *Nijinsky's Les Noirs* would have been ample and would have been a valuable and instructive addition to the AB repertoire. Let us hope that in 1983, the AB strikes at least some sort of gesture towards the greatest ever master of ballet music, Igor Stravinsky on the centenary of his birth.

But one must give credit where credit is due. In the prescribed limits of dance in Australia, Borovansky does play a large part. He was the one that took over from all the visiting companies that appeared here a least once every two or three years or so, and gradually moulded an ensemble of dancers and creators that were Australian in both birth and manner (although sprinkled with the occasional overseas genius).

In more pragmatic terms, he built up a body of capable dancers and a ground base of repertoire that could in fact survive his death and withstand the transition to the Australian Ballet as we know it today.

Marilyn Jones, in announcing the Borovansky Tribute described it as a selection of works that Boro himself would have chosen, and which in actual fact was performed in his day by *Pineapple Polk*, *Shéhérazade* and *Graduation Ball*. Once



Shéhérazade by Borovansky. Photo: Bruce Goss

more I think the tribute could have gone a little further, by reviving some of the works, or music or designs that he was associated with. Heaven knows we could do without a revival of *Three Astrakans*, it would only be laughable these days, but the present selection looks suspiciously like a comfortable, box-office-secure selection that will stand the administration in good stead for a while yet, no matter what the quality of dancing and appreciation is in future seasons or even in the other digital ones this year.

But all things considered, the Tribute to Borovansky was far more of an artistic success than anyone had expected, for two thirds of its time that is **PINEAPPLE POLK**.

That used old, vapid Cronin ballet, *Pineapple Polk* was once again cranked out, really wasn't worth the effort of re-mounting, and generally depressed the hell out of the audience. It is not only the fact that the work had inadequate rehearsal and rushed casting, that old warhorse has dated itself positively into the grave.

But the other two works on the programme, Folmer's *Shéhérazade* and Lichner's *Graduation Ball* were two of the greatest performances that the Australian Ballet have ever given, not only because the commitment and all-out energy were there, but because the works themselves are great and were both superbly managed by two of Borovansky's former dancers, Yvonne Trunoff and Joan Peter **SCHÉHERAZADE**.

When *Shéhérazade* was first presented by the Ballets Russes in 1910, it marked the true beginning of that famous company,

and made the names of Bakst (designer), Folmer (choreographer) and Nijinsky (in the lead role of the Golden Slave). Previously, the West had only an inkling of the uniqueness of the company in the Policeism dance from Prince Igor and the talents of Freder Shliapin (in *Boris Godunov*) and Nijinsky (in Folmer's *Pavane de Armée*).

It was Folmer's signal achievement in this work in that he had taken the ballet form out of the stiff courtly manner of a divertimento and had forged it into a poem, a captive form of drama, self-contained in narrative and gesture. To be sure, in the present day, it looks a little creaky at times, what with all that involved pantomime at the beginning with the Shah departing for his ban and the consummation of his brother over the alleged infidelity of his favourite wife Zolaida. But once the slaves are released from the prison and begin the slowly cumulative dance formations that build up to the final orgy, the essence of dance matches the story from the integrated movie passages and tells the tale solely in choreographic values.

The ballet as such is basically a vehicle for the male lead, the Golden Slave. The original Zolaida, Ida Rubinstein, was a wealthy woman who fancied herself as a dancer but was certainly no match for the formidable talents of Pavlova or Kshesinska. She was a mime, and when gets down to it, her role has very little real extended dance passages in it, what is important is that the mime well and look voluptuous throughout. She did it well, and so did Maria Kshesinska and Shree de Ceste in the present AB revival.

Both of these women successfully played

the part as desirable end itself at the same time, something of a siren and a Madonna mosaic. The male role was tailor made for Mijawsky, the incredible musician and effortless baller in those huge jumps transformed the ballet into a legend. On the opening night in Sydney, Robert Cioe played the Golden Slave and it was a lot for this worthy dancer that he came across as elemental and vital as he did, without once overplaying his hand. The Golden Slave is a messianic character, sympathetic and perhaps not totally human, but he should not be played as pathetic and sexual, it is sexuality that makes this part and Cioe had the slip, unlike millions just right. If any one of those enormous backbeats and straky undulations is overdone, the ballet can sink into Las Vegas floor show fantasy. They weren't and Cioe's interpretation was evocative and gripping, but not provocative and harrowing.

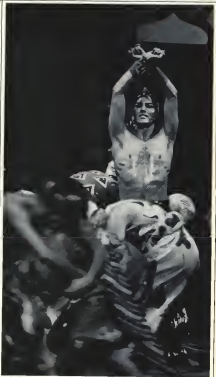
David Bough, one of the alternate casts in the role, was wild and passionate, and there were times when he set the stage alight more than Cioe did but he dominated the scene too much, as if Zobeide was his slave and not the other way around. This could have been due to the fact that Steven de Costa was a little too circumplex in performance, she didn't have the commanding hauteur that Kirkaldie had.

CORPS SUPERS

Yet above and beyond the lead roles, it was the corps de ballet that made the Schéhérazade work. The AB corps is such an off again on again concern that one sometimes can't be sure whether they'll be good in a ballet that seems ready made for group attack. But this time they worked together superbly, again a vindication of the intense work that Tyness and Porter had put into the rehearsals.

Apart from a few harlem dances early on in the ballet, the corps as an entity doesn't really come into its own until the last few movements. The slaves and slaves got carried totally away by dance and good exotic music, equals the Golden Slave and Zobeide in two huge pulsating circles, like a couple of vast wheels of human flesh and then dispenses into a solid wall of bodies that is transformed into an almost literal vision of the same pattern of Borisly Komakow's score. It is at this point that the Shah, his brother and the palace guards appear and systematically break up the formation by hawking all and sundry to death.

Despite the fact that even in this movement, Polonsky could not completely break away from the almost absolute symmetry of forms of a classical corps configuration, the growing whirling power of these final moments is well worth the close attention of anyone interested in watching a dramatic climax built in a



Robert Cioe as the Golden Slave in the ABG Schéhérazade. Photo Bruno Gnaul

partly choreographic form and especially necessary for stirred and aspiring choreographers who are fascinated with the logistics of mass movement.

For once, Dobbs Franks and the Sydney Elizabethan Trust orchestra got the full

measuring of a piece of music for ballet, neither leaving a passion to shreds musically speaking nor conforming the musical fabric to accommodate the vagaries of a dancer's limitations and strengths.

Of Greg Irvine's sets and costumes I am not so sure. To be certain they are sumptuous and elaborate but not in the way that Baker's originals were. The Baker designs in their day started a whole range and manner of haute couture throughout Paris. That city and that society had never seen such rich, voluptuous colours and textures. Greg Irvine's designs on the other hand, though while they still comply with the choreographic demands of the ballet, come straight from the fashion colours of the moment, with all those hot pinks and Yves St Laurent stripes. It can be said that the old designs of Baker are rarely reconstructed as well as they should be but saving other corruptions in the world here does it I see no reason why an attempt was not made to create the designs that went with the original choreography and the chosen music for a ballet that has become a part of the 20th century's dance heritage.

GRADUATION BALL

There were no quibbles over the reconstruction of Boccia's sets and costumes, so little else for that matter, in the AB revival of Luchini's *Graduation Ball*. It was so heartening to see the AB performing a work that demands a light touch and a witty conscience without dropping into their usual top, "Mogwai" mantras.

Although *Graduation Ball* can be seen purely as a "ballet" ballet, it has to have the same Beethoven feel and atmosphere about it for all those little cultural pointers and contrasts to work. Above all, the success of the work relies on an audience liking the characters in it, and for an audience to do that, those characters must be brought to convincing life by means of deft and delicate brushstrokes of personality.

Although people think of Luchini's work as a masterpiece sprung fully formed from the mind of its creator, *Graduation Ball* does have its antecedents, primarily that of Kurt Jooss' *A Ball in Old Vienna*. There are so many similarities in the two works (pace, style and characterisation) that one could say that Luchini used the earlier work as a blueprint.

Graduation Ball has a group of young society deb's partnered by a small regiment of military cadets. There's a crossy old general and a flard and dink vengo of a schoolmistress (in travesty) interlarded between the innocent flirtations and circular waltzes is a series of solos and duets aimed at the "audience" as the ball. Luchini's artificiality here is of a double strength.

Australian born (but Royal Ballet bred) Leon Stribos has returned home and the "Scotsman and Sylphide" pas de deux is a

Bourgeoisie, danced with Gary Morrison was an excellent debut to show off her serene and liquid style. Doubtless she has other strengths (I will remember her in Balmuccini's *Prokofiev Jost*) but seeing that the debt in question has absolutely nothing to do with either the preceding mood of the ballet or the "totality" of its world, nothing could be higher praise than to say that with these two dances, credibility was suspended for the duration of the pas de deux.

As for all the other ensemble pieces in the divertimento, the Competition Dance, the dance for the Pigeon Girl and the Drummer Boy they were all danced with that verve and bubble that this first by her enduring ballet demands. The only drawback was Dale Baker's occasional sloppy footwork and lack of masculinity as the Drummer.

But *Graduation Ball* has to be a likable ballet if it is to succeed, the audience has to be drawn into the Emperor Franz Josef world and feel a part of that atmosphere, above all they have to have a feeling that they know a little more about those people on stage once the curtain goes down.

It is to the Australian Ballet's credit, and to the masterful repertoire work of Trunoff and Petter, that all of this was achieved, and the AB's *Graduation Ball* was mightily liked.





A STAR IS TORN

'A Star Is Torn' is not a series of impersonations, but celebrations of eleven supremely gifted women whose presence and talent caught the public imagination of their own time — and whose songs and lives have continued to shape and alter style and consciousness in the twentieth century.

— Rodney Fisher

When the final areas of the Adelaide Festival Centre, The Playhouse and The Space, were to be opened in November, 1974, a number of music and drama critics from the eastern states were invited to attend as guests of the Festival Centre Trust.

I was one of those critics: when I saw that The Space was to open with a production by the then New Opera of SA of the Kurt Weill/Bertolt Brecht 'The Seven Deadly Sins' I was frankly sceptical of how successful this would be, knowing how difficult it is to project this moralistic musical fable, in particular, it needs in the role of the 'singing' Annie a singer of the Lotta Lange style who can inject into this role the vocal quality and atmosphere of the Berlin cabaret of the late 1920's. I doubted that there was a singer of this calibre in Australia.

That opening night proved me wrong, and provided one of those memorable nights when one instinctively knows that a 'star' has been born.

As I wrote at that time, 'The Seven Deadly Sins

was the highpoint of that opening festival, being a 'stunning, volcanic presentation which, because of the intimacy The Space provides between audience and layers, had a dramatic impact that was almost physical'. The main reason for this impact, I went on to point out, was the appearance as the 'singing' Annie of Robyn Archer with her 'strong, deep voice and the ability to really punch out a song'.

I first met Robyn Archer at a first-night party after that performance, and have followed her subsequent career with close interest, having seen and reviewed all her more recent musical-theatre shows.

It was in 1977 in the Australian Stage Company's production of 'Never The Twain' that I first heard her: she was the only woman in the cast of this show, a compilation by John Willett of the words of Brecht and Kipling, to the music of Weill and other composers. In my review of that performance I pointed out that "in this style of music, Kurt Weill's in particular, she is incomparable", and selected her singing of two Weill songs -

Kipling's 'Mary, Pity Women' and Brecht's 'Sourabaya Johnny' - as "the dramatic peak of the evening, most moving and effective performance".

Then came the very successful 'Kold Comfort Kaffee' which she devised and wrote, and this was quickly followed by 'A Star Is Torn', in which she collaborated with writer/director Rodney Fisher. After an initial Melbourne run at the Universal Theatre, Fitzroy, this one-woman show had a week's season at The Playhouse in Canberra. This show marked a new peak in the career of this extraordinary entertainer - here, in two hours on stage, she recreated the lives and songs of a dozen of the greatest women entertainers of this century and exhibited a versatility and stamina that was quite daunting. Just singing all or part of some 70 songs associated with them, and catching and conveying the widely varied vocal styles and mannerisms of each singer, was a vocal tour-de-force in itself.

In reviewing this show I found "a certain detachment, as if she were standing outside each singer and pointing out to the audience the vulnere-

bility and faults as well as the glory which made each a victim as well as a star", and felt that such a Brechtian approach was one of the strengths of the performance.

There was also the way in which the styles and mannerisms of each singer had been caught as well as the actual sound of the voices - the curious little shuffle across the stage of Bernice Smith, Helen Morgan perched atop the piano with the inevitable scar in her hands, and Billie Holiday with head thrown back and eyes half-closed as she sang.

It was also interesting that Robyn Archer included two artists who were not 'born stars' - the English "music-hall Queen" of the turn of the century, Maud Lloyd, and Jane Froman who triumphed over crippling adversity. One felt that while Robyn Archer might have felt sad about the pain of her 'torn stars' she did not really feel much sympathy for them; this was underlined by the quotation of Sophie Tucker's response when that great singer was asked how best to cope with life and achieve success - "keep breathing" she said.

Despite its title and the



sad ladies who make up most of the subjects, 'A Star is Torn' is not a sob story: there is an underlying affirmation of life to it.

Later in 1979 Robyn toured nationally with 'Tonight: Lola Blau'. Georg Kreidler's text and music which depicts the public life and private tragedy of a young, ambitious cabaret singer in the Vienna of the late 1930s. Lola Blau was another "sad lady of song", but although I found the show "an engrossing and exciting piece of musical theatre" I did not find it quite as effective a vehicle for Robyn Archer as her own 'A Star is Torn'. Nevertheless it was "another brilliant tour-de-force from this multi-talented singer".

Then, finally, just a few weeks ago, I was present at the opening of Robyn Archer's latest show, 'Songs From Sideshow Alley' at the Adelaide Festival of Arts. Billed as "her first ever entirely original show" it had been specially commissioned for this year's Festival. It is a nostalgic look at the fading glories of the sideshow alleys which have for so long greased The "Royal Ag Shows" around this country as seen through the eyes of two rival sideshow ladies - in this she is brilliantly partnered by actress Robyn Nevin.

Again there is the keen perception of life and of character that is so apparent in 'A Star is Torn' - the original music is a marvellous pastiche of the melodies and styles

of the '40s and '50s, suggesting the songs of that period without ever directly quoting. This new show demonstrates a further facet of the varied talents of Robyn Archer as actress and singer as well as writer - it bore out for me the "daunting versatility of this multi-talented artist" that I had perceived in my original review of 'A Star is Born'.

There is also in 'Songs From Sideshow Alley' the same underlying affirm-

ation of life that was so strong an impression in the earlier show. It is hard to predict what this remarkable artist will bring us next; but there is so much vitality to everything she does that one can feel certain that, unlike many of the singers whose songs she has brought us, Robyn Archer will "keep breathing".

W.L. HOFFMAN
SENIOR MUSIC CRITIC
"THE CAMBERA TIMES"



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INSIDE THE ISLAND

Louise Noun
director Neil Armfield

Robyn Archer devised and wrote the first version of 'A Star Is Torn' in 1975. The following year she collaborated with writer/director Rodney Fisher, developing the show to its present state.

Born in Adelaide in 1948, Robyn began singing while still at school, accompanying herself on guitar. She appeared regularly on Bandstand and was in the Grand Final of Starlight International 1964. Robyn graduated with honours in Arts at the University of Adelaide in 1969. In her time at university she expanded her musical interests to encompass jazz, blues, rock and country and became involved with drama and revue groups and local children's theatre (invariably playing the witch). In 1967 she formed her first band, the 'Jug Scrubbin' Mamas'.

After her graduation Robyn went straight into a regular cabaret/singer-comedienne role at a nightclub (two shows a night, six nights a week). In 1971 she moved into the Sydney club circuit and had just landed a contract to do a Philip Theatre Revue when a motorcycle accident put her on crutches for four months.

She returned to Adelaide, gained her Diploma of Education and did some teaching for two years; at the same time singing six nights a week at the Old Lion Hotel.

In 1974 she was approached by Justin MacDonnell of the State Opera of South Australia to perform the role of Annie 1 in the Brecht/

Weill theatre piece, 'The Seven Deadly Sins'. This production was the start of her association with the works of Brecht. She has since been called 'Perhaps the finest performer of Brecht's songs in the world' - by the National Times. She has appeared in 'The Threepenny Opera' (Adelaide Festival Centre, 1975); 'Never The Twain' (a compilation of the works of Brecht and

of Dietrich. She's the type of artist to give cabaret a good name).

She performs three recital programmes - 'Brecht & Co', 'Songs Of Protest And Commitment' (radical Italian poems and songs); and 'Why Must The Show Go On?' (Anglo-American cabaret). She has recorded several albums, 'The Ladies' Choir' (her own songs) in 1977; 'The Wild Girl In The Heart

Kattee', for Sydney's Nimrod Theatre. 'Kold Komfort Kattee' has played, in three sell-out seasons, to over 18,000 people.

In 1978 she toured the Northern Territory (playing country music); South East Asia (for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Musica Viva); played 'A Star Is Torn' to sell-out audiences in Melbourne and Canberra; then toured 'Tonight, Lola Blau' nationally for the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and AGC-Paradise.

Her most recent performances have been in her own 'Rough As Gula' concerts at the Sydney Opera House and Dallas Brooks Hall and, with Robyn Neale, in 'Songs From Slideshow Alley', a show she wrote on commission from the Adelaide Festival.

She has also written 'The Live-Could-Possibly - Be - True - One - Day Adventures of Superwomen' (for the Adelaide Theatre-in-Education Team); 'The Conquest Of Carmen Miranda' (a full-length music theatre piece); 'A Star Is Torn' (with Rodney Fisher); and is currently in the final stages of completion of 'Il Magnifico'.

She has written the music for Patrick Cook's 'Captain Larr and his Earthbound Circus' (on commission from the Melbourne Theatre of Australia) and several short films.

In 1980 she was awarded a Senior Fellowship by the Literature Board of the Australia Council which she has deferred in order to travel overseas (to New York, Berlin and London) to work and study later this year.



Kipling, Adelaide Festival Centre 1977 and the Sydney Opera House and Canberra Theatre); and 'To Those Born Later' (a programme of Brecht's poems and songs at the National Theatre, London, 1977).

John Higgins wrote in The Times, London: 'Miss Archer hits a note as hard as Pfit and shapes the phrase with the sensuality and irony

(her settings of contemporary Australian poets) in 1979; songs from 'Tonight Lola Blau' and 'A Star Is Torn' in 1980. Later this year a live album of January's 'Rough As Gula' concerts will appear, along with The Robyn Archer Songbook' to be published by Mophos Gribble.

In 1978 she devised the extraordinarily successful cabaret, 'Kold Komfort

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Rodney Fisher's production of Simon Gray's 'Close of Play' ('a night of brilliance' — H.G. Kipper) has transferred to the Theatre Royal after a sell-out season at the Drama Theatre. He directed his play 'The Bearded From The Bush' ('a splendid evening' — Katharine Brisbane) — written in collaboration with Robin Ramsay — at the Riverside Studios, London, 1976, and at Nimrod and the Adelaide Festival Centre in 1978. In 1978 he also directed 'Intimate Letters' ('beauty and intensity' — David Dougall) — a ballet choreographed by Lynn Seymour — for the Royal Ballet at Sadlers Wells and for the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. He has directed three world premieres of David Williamson's plays: 'The Department', 'A Handful of Friends' and, most recently, 'The Club' ('a remarkable theatrical occasion' — John Larkin). Theatre pieces he has created and directed include 'A Long View', 'All Of Us Or None', 'Scars and Strife' and 'Sylvia Plath' ('the most perfect small event' — Margaret Jones) for the Adelaide Festival 1978. He is currently at work on 'I Rode With Buffalo Bill', a new play about King O'Malley. From 1972 to 1976 he was Associate Director of the South Australian Theatre Company. He is, at present, resident in Sydney.

'A Star Is Torn' ('an evening of breathtaking variety' — Virginia Dagen; 'a sparkling production' — Catherine Peck) is the first collaboration between Rodney Fisher and Ruby's Archer. It opened at the Universal Theatre, Melbourne on May 13, 1979 for sell-out seasons there and in Canberra.



MARIE LLOYD
(1870-1922)
"No other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of the music hall audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the people that made Marie Lloyd unique."
T.S. Elliot



HELEN MORGAN
(1900-1941)

"Her throaty voice and softly vulnerable looks, the almost casual delivery of her material from the piano gave her a rapport with her audience; she seemingly embraced the audience with her gentle sexy languorousness and lovingly drew them to her."
Charles Schwartz



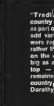
BESSIE SMITH
(1894-1937)

"Now comes the big hush. Just the piano goes. Then I hear her voice and I know this is it...my lucky day! I'm hearing her best and I'm seeing her too. Resplendent is the only word that can describe her."
Art Hodes



JUDY GARLAND
(1922-1968)

"She can belt it out right over the brassband band; she can sit down with the pianist and get that heart-pulling quaver on just the right notes; she can swing it with a jazz octet with a purity of style that verges on the classic."
Judith Crist



"Traditional country as part of the odd variety were not rather than on the big as a top — remained country. Dorothy"



BILLIE HOLIDAY
(1915-1959)

"And always the insoucious gardenia, worn like a large, white beautiful ear, the heavy laugh, marvelous teeth, and the splendid archaic head, dragged up from the Aegean. Sometimes she died her hair red and the curls lay flat against her skull, like dried blood." Elizabeth Hardwick



DINAH WASHINGTON
(1924-1953)

"There never was any other singer quite like Dinah. She had in her voice a toned cordonic quality which gave a personal meaning to every lyric she touched. She made the listener know that she meant what she was singing about." Leonard Feather



MARILYN MONROE
(1926-1962)

"She had a luminous quality — a combination of witfulness, radiance, yearning — to set her apart and yet make everyone wish to be a part of it, to share in the child-like naivete which was all onto so shy and yet so vibrant." Leo Straszberg



EDITH PIAF
(1915-1963)

"She surpasses the words and the music and ut The soul of the street filters into every room. It is no longer she who sings: it is the rain that falls, it is the wind that blows, it is the moon spreading her mantle of light." Jean Cocteau



JANIS JOPLIN
(1943-1970)

"She was a blues singer of right now. She took the blues and made it immediate in its sound, by the way she propelled the words out of her mouth, by the way she shaped the sounds and by the volume she poured into it." Ralph J. Gleason



PATSY CLINE
(1932-1963)
ally, women were carried package show to red spice and ed as a tax loss an asset. Patsy, hand, made it list and hit like a though she only within the closeness." foreman





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Peter Heald was born Peter Beagley in Adelaide, 1948. He began playing the piano at the age of eleven and since then has performed with countless rock'n'roll, cabaret, country and jazz bands, including Heald-band. He first worked with Robyn Archer with the Peter Beagley Trio which was Robyn's introduction to performing jazz and blues. He later acted as co-producer on her first album, 'The Ladies' Choice'. He has played with rock and reggae bands in London, worked as musical director on theatre shows, written and recorded his

A Star is Tom! follows directly on the heels of 'Tonight Lola Star', the first highly successful collaboration between Dale Ringland and Robyn Archer. Between shows he was Musical Director on the record albums of both shows. He is, in fact one of Australia's busiest musicians. An outstanding organist, he is giving a recital on the Sydney Opera House Grand Organ in May; an accomplished French Horn player, he has played frequently with the Sydney Elizabethan Orchestra; his two years as conductor with the Australian Ballet, 1968-70, have led to numerous engagements with overseas ballet companies, and he was Associate Conductor with the Bolshoi Ballet on their most recent Australian tour; and he has also been the featured pianist at the Bennelong Restaurant, Sydney Opera House. Until 1976 he was associated for more than a decade with every major musical produced by J.C. Williamson's: 'Sweet Charity', 'Man Of La Mancha', 'Irene', 'A Little Night Music', 'Gypsy', 'The Wiz', etc. He was Musical Director for 'Side By Side By Sonnet', and is currently preparing 'They're Playing Our Song', the new Broadway musical soon to open at Sydney's Theatre Royal.



own songs; written, recorded and produced jingles and soundtracks for film and television; played as a session musician and taught both keyboard and guitar. In 1974 he won the SKA Radio Rock Award for his contribution to the music industry. His rock musical, 'Lotto', was produced at her Her Majesty's Theatre, Adelaide in 1977; and his children's rock musical, 'Fun And Games', was staged and recorded in 1978. He has recently completed his third season as pianist at the Piano Bar, Adelaide Festival Centre.

While studying music and drama at the State College of Victoria, Robert Garin was awarded a scholarship to study composition and conducting with the BBC in London; and he worked with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Fires of London and the London Opera Group and with conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Georg Solti and Riccardo Muti. Since his return to Australia he has worked as composer, arranger, teacher and performer. His ballet, 'Rondo', was performed by the Peninsula Ballet in 1977. In 1978 he conducted the incidental music for two Melbourne Theatre Company productions — 'Ring Around The Moon' and 'The Merchant Of Venice', and conducted music workshops with dance students at Rusden College. In 1979 he composed and directed the music for 'Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys' by Bob George, and Frank Hauser's pantomime for the Melbourne Theatre Company, 'Cinderella'. Last March he was Musical Director of 'Krazy 4 You' (The Last Laugh), Jeannie Lewis' one woman cabaret. He has been conductor of the Melbourne University Orchestra for the past three years and has written a great many songs.



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Sylvia Jansons first designed 'A Star Is Torn' for the Universal Theatre in Melbourne. The present set incorporates over seventy of her paintings. She graduated in Fine Arts from Sydney University in 1974. While teaching in Sydney, she exhibited her painting and sculpture. When Lindsey Kemp came to Australia in 1976 he called her 'a genius'. She worked with him at the New Arts Theatre and then joined his company in London, variously designing sets, costumes and posters for 'Flowers', 'Clowns', 'Salome' and 'Mr Punch's Pantomime'. She also worked for Steven Berkoff in London, designing 'East', 'The Fall Of The House Of Usher' and 'Metamorphoses' — the last of which she also designed in Australia (Nimrod Theatre 1979, Melbourne Theatre Company 1979). Her film, 'Loves Of Lady Purple' was shown at the Edinburgh Festival in 1979. In 1979, as well as 'A Star Is Torn', she designed 'Cabaret' for Ross McGregor at the Hunter Valley Theatre and 'Tonight Lola Blue', starring Robyn Archer, for the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust. She recently designed 'New Blood' for Mike Mullins at the Cleveland Street Performance Space. She is one of Australia's most outstanding graphic artists.



Anne Senior, who has designed Robyn Archer's costumes for 'A Star Is Born', is one of Australia's most outstanding designers — especially in the field of film and television. She studied Dress Design at East Sydney Art College and since then her major work includes some of the best feature films made in Australia during the past decade: 'Age Of Consent', 'Wake In Fright', 'Don's Party', 'The Getting Of Wisdom', 'An Odd Angry Shot', 'Breaker Morant', and 'My Brilliant Career' for which she won the Australian Film Institute Best Costume Design Award for 1978. Her recent theatre work includes 'A Cheery Soul' for the Sydney Theatre Company in 1978, 'Songs From Sideshow Alley' for this year's Adelaide Festival, and she is currently supervising costumes for the Australian production of 'Evie'.



I took several tours of Australia for Keith Edmundson and Ellen Grech to realise that boomerangs really do come back. The tours for the Old Vic Company, formerly the Prospect, it was when they returned to England in March 1979 and found that another tour was being planned to culminate in Australia that the idea of living here began to take root. This, their last tour, was a revival of Toby Robertson's production of 'Name!' with Derek Jacobi. They had both worked on the 1977 original and now there was the prospect of China and Japan, and a visit to Lahore (for which Keith designed a 2,000 seat auditorium to be built in the courtyard of Kronberg Castle). The whole tour was a triumphant success and the decision to live upside down at the bottom of the world seemed a good way to end their long association with the Old Vic as Lighting Designer/Technical Director and Stage Manager respectively. So they moved into a house in Balmain with three suitcases and a cassette player. Keith took a job at NIDA as Lighting and Sound Lecturer and also in 'Close of Play' and 'No Names...No Peck Drills' (Sydney Theatre Company) and 'Gullie's House' and 'House Of The Dead Man' (Nimrod). Meanwhile Ellen painted the house green and cultivated a sunken which was just as much hard work. Both would like to discover more of Australia. They enjoy Australian wine, the sea and the last ferry to Balmain. They were married last October between Bradford, Yorkshire and Tokyo, Japan...



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OPERA



by David Gyger

Death in Venice and nationwide productions

The Australian Opera hit the road during March, following the end of its summer season at the Sydney Opera House — taking *Don Giovanni* and *The Girl of the Golden West* briefly to Canberra before opening its major 1983 Melbourne season with performances of *The Magic Flute*, *Falstaff* and *La Traviata* late in the month.

Scarcely, in economic terms anyway, all were revivals. All this year's new productions are being unveiled at home base, the first of the winter season being Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* on June 9, followed by the Joan Sutherland/Donald Smith extravaganza Verdi's little-known *I Macchietti*, on July 2.

Which is not to say that March was without its operative interest nationally, with important events in four very widely flung States. Far and away the most important event of the month was the State Opera of South Australia's Australian premiere season of Benjamin Britten's last opera, *Death in Venice*, at this year's Adelaide Festival.

This production was a marvellous triumph all round — for conductor Myer Friedman, a rightly lauded exponent of English music, in his twelfth year as musical director of State Opera, for director Ben Shusterman, returning to the diaphanous for the first time since his much abused "sheep-shepherd" production of *Don Giovanni* for the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company, predecessor of the

present national company, in 1967, and above all for Robert Gard in the grumbling central role of Gustav von Aschenbach.

At the same time, Melbourne was having a froth-and-bubble appetiser from its resident State company before the arrival of the national company, and Brisbane was having overlapping seasons of Donizetti's *Anna Bolina* and the Berlioz/Weill classic, *The Threepenny Opera*, and in Ipswich Perth they were starting the year with a big bang in the form of a couple of concert performances of Verdi's *Aida*.

All of which added up to as hectic and fascinating a March as Australian opera has experienced in living memory — even if the absolute frenzy of on-stage activity couldn't quite obscure altogether the disconcerting news from backstage.

NEWS FROM BACKSTAGE

In particular in Queensland, where enough prop-holes penetrated the official curtain of secrecy surrounding the future organisation of opera in that State to reveal at least, by month's end, that John Thompson's official State company had a new board and a special plan to deal it out of a financial crisis, and that its politically formidable and ambitious competitors, David MacFarlane's Queensland Light Opera Company, had scored a major national opera coup by signing up Donald Smith and Margreta Elford to sing the title roles, late in the year, of *Saint-Saens' Samson and Delilah*.

The dolestrous running gun battle between the AO and the YSO for the rights of first refusal from the theoretically enormous and lucrative horde of Melbourne opera-lovers who have so far

disguised themselves and concealed their whereabouts so effectively that nobody seems really to know where they are, had mounted down at least temporarily to allow behind-the-scenes negotiations to take place.

And the Western Australian Opera Company had seemingly weathered last year's financial crisis with sufficient doggedness to appoint Gerald King (current musical director for 1988, advertise for a new musical director and principal conductor at not less than \$20,000 a year and plan confidently to mount major productions of Verdi's *La Traviata* and Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in the newly refurbished Her Majesty's Theatre, Perth, in June and October).

Even if, as detailed above, there is no dearth of conflict to delight addicts of the blood sports even as it provokes the despair of anyone really interested in the development of the art form in this country.

But finally, of course, the only thing that matters about opera — or any other art form — is what happens creatively, specifically, in the case of the performing arts, on stage. Which leads us back to the Adelaide *Death in Venice*, and the observation that it was an undeniable coup for State Opera and every bit as important an event, nationally, as Joan Sutherland's 21st anniversary *Laura* had been a month earlier at the Sydney Opera House.

DEATH IN VENICE

For *Death in Venice* is a near-contemporary work of undeniable genius, which clearly ought to have been made



Robert Gard (Aschenbach), Ben Williamson (Falstaff) and the Dance Ensemble in *Death in Venice*

available to Australian audiences before now, a work of sufficient intrinsic merit, as well as sufficient public interest justifiable in advance, as the last opera of the major English-speaking composer of our time, to have thoroughly justified the national company in daring to risk a production even in the foreknowledge that some of its patrons would leap up and down at a gap.

But in view of the AO's past record in this area it was no surprise the company failed to act in this case, and its ten of omission allowed State Opera to score yet another telling point against the ultra-conservative programming policy of the AO — which in view of the enormous subsidies it receives as national flag-bearer for its art form, ought to be taking a good deal more seriously its duty to present the new and the indigenous.

Maybe it is arguable that the work of imported composers ought to be used as firm in the modern context of regional company productions, but at least some opera can be mounted acceptably on a

shootings not in any of the nation's regional opera companies capable of risking the resources required to do justice to many major operas.

Even State Opera, far and away the most adequately funded opera company in Australia, outside the national company itself, reportedly had a worrying pre-production period with *Death in Venice*, which only came good as it were, because enough people exhibited enough faith in the production and the work to persevere. And of course the risk was in the event justified and more — both at the box office in the short term and in terms of a likely sale to the AO to go into repertory in 1982 or so.

As it appears on stage, *Death in Venice* is virtually a three-person opera, though it does also contain a large number of other named characters, they are all merely passing shadows flitting briefly into view on the periphery of a world peopled imaginatively only by the aging novelist Gustav von Aschenbach, the beautiful Polish boy Turgenev, and the multi-faceted

half-breed character who guards Aschenbach toward death like the ferryman across the River Styx (one of the games he assumes in the opera being, of course, that of an old grandfather actually ferrying Aschenbach to a destination where he does not wish to go).

The role of Bronco's Aschenbach is not only personal dramatically but extremely demanding vocally, one of the greatest endurance tests in all opera. For Aschenbach is virtually never off stage all night — standing back to muse on the unfolding events when he is not caught up in them, bridging the gulf between those scenes unimposed for dramatic in a spotlight, vocally (as he does in opera) the sometimes thoughts he might be expected in real life, as a novelist, author to have confided to a notebook, or merely stored up and mailed over in his mind pending incorporation into some literary work-in-progress.

EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Clearly, casting this role is almost the most important decision to be made when one is considering staging *Death in Venice*; and it was a mark of considerable advance faith in the talents of Robert Gledhill that his name was put about the only one ever mentioned in Australian musical circles, before the event, as a serious candidate for the honor of creating Aschenbach in Australia (the only other possible contender who springs to mind is Ronald Dwyer). Not did this faith prove in the event to have been misplaced: his performance was every bit as effective as everyone had expected it to be.

Indeed, one of the few compensations, perhaps, for the fact that it took so long for *Death in Venice* to reach an Australian stage was the fact that Gledhill's Aschenbach as a result benefited from the marked expertise in the quality of his voice production following a recent study stint in Germany. He has always been an actor-singer of the highest order, but sounded somehow by too much of a longbridge on his singing voice which has now all but disappeared — with the result that first his *Giuseppe* (in recent performances of *Parsifal* for the national company), and now his Aschenbach, have been the most overall satisfying ones of his career to date.

One of the few disappointments of the Adelaide *Death in Venice* was Tom McDonnell's performance of the seven supporting baritone roles which are so important to the dramatic sense of the piece. Unfortunately, he was still recuperating on opening night from a throat infection which had caused the cancellation of a scheduled preview performance, and one cannot but suspect that his dramatic effectiveness, as well as his vocal performance, was compromised as a result. His was a good effort



PHOTO BY THE GLENN HARRIS GROUP



Justin Lawrence (*The Count*) and Yvonne Kenny (*Countess Adèle*) in *The 39th Case*
 City Photo David Parker

nonethless, yet it was a pity he too was not in top form in a context where just about everyone and everything else was really quite memorable.

It was a brilliant master stroke of Batten, when transforming Thomas Mann's novella into an opera, to solve the problem of the non-communication between Aschenbach and the boy Tadzio by making the boy and his family into non-singing dancers. This, combined with the fact that they are given special, exotic music all their own — dulcet-toned Eastern music, featuring instruments not used when they are off-stage — distances them from the central reality of the plotstream, the personal crisis of Aschenbach. Tadzio and his renouveau move through the action almost like a mirage, distanced through their silence even when they are present, surrounded as it were by an impenetrable barrier that prevents direct communication with them.

Yet there is also a problem with Tadzio, who, in the novella (and presumably the opera as well), is supposed to be only fourteen years old; for the youth who dances the part in Batten's opera must be possessed of sufficient physical eloquence to compensate for the fact that he is deprived of any sort of vocal communication. The result must be that most dancers capable of playing Tadzio will look too old, and this was indeed a problem with Ian Wilkinson in the Adelaide production.

A more important problem, though, was the actual nature of Ian Spink's choreography, which seemed too classically based

and insufficiently explicit — particularly in the first major dance sequence, specifically titled *The Games of Apollo* and intended to represent the Olympic pentathlon — to suit the demands of the opera.

Brian Thompson's set designs, mostly all in black like the inside of a coffin, stretching to a flowing white curtain to suggest the brilliance of sea, sun and surf for the beach scene, were marvelously effective, and they were effectively complemented by Lucian Arrighi's fairly elaborate period costumes.

Jim Sherman's production was cinematic, in keeping with the demands of the piece, with many scene changes bridged by a continuous flow of music, and it was at the same time rigorous of detail, underlining time and again Aschenbach's inability to relate to the real world by physically keeping him at abnormal distance from those around him. Sherman's hand was often evident if you looked for it, but it was never gimmicky or intrusive — the mark of the best in directing standards.

And Myr Freedman, who is nearing the end of his term as resident musical director for State Opera, poured yet again what a special affinity he has for contemporary English music with a thoroughly sensitive reading of Benjamin's complex score.

It is fervently to be hoped that the Australian Opera does in fact acquire this *Death in Venice* and put it into repertory in 1982, as is being freely mooted in musical circles, and at the same time that it once again call Grazia as Aschenbach, and recreate the services of Sherman to direct

and acquire the services of Freedman to conduct.

QOC'S MARY STUART

The other most noteworthy opera production of the month under review was the Queensland Opera Company's rather marvellous realisation of Donizetti's *Mary Stuart*, starring Margaret Russell as an exceedingly credible Elizabeth I and Phyllis Ball as a thoroughly convincing Mary Queen of Scots.

This opera, of course, contains a superbly dramatic if thoroughly unobtrusive confrontation scene between the two queens which was played magnificently by the two Queenslanders under the sure direction of John Thompson — both vocally and through a variety of music gestures and well thought-out facial expressions, they conveyed the marvellously operatic progress from intended conciliation through rough passion to the final death that Mary hurls at Elizabeth which leads directly to her beheading.

The other major role, that of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, was well sung and acted by tenor Henry Howell, returning to the QOC — where he was principal resident actor some time ago — from English National Opera for this season. Good, if not outstanding, support came from students Paul Neal as William Cecil and Dennis White as George Talbot.

YVO'S COUNT ONY

Meanwhile, the Victoria State Opera was mounting a thoroughly pleasurable froth-and-bubble production of Rossini's *Count Ony* which more than did justice to the rather meagre merits of the work itself.

Yvonne Kenny and Justin Lawrence were superb in the central roles. Lawrence in particular being much better suited to Rossini's more vocally ornate, and less dramatically weighted, demands than those of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* where I last previously had seen both him and Kenny.

Neal Mangin was a bit too overwhelming for the sort of peer, but adequate support came from Victorians Suzanne Steele, John Wood and Ian Corrie, as well as Jennifer Birmingham on loan from the national company.

Yet finally the whole thing reeked of overkill, kind of like blasted Gilbert and Sullivan without Gilbert's pungent wit. Which is no reflection on the sure-footed direction of Anthony Beech, or the musical direction of Richard Orrell, or the marvellous draught of Kenneth Russell, merely on the decision-making process involved in choosing to present *Count Ony* when so many other more meritorious scores lie unadorned in the operatic toasts of the world.

David Gyger is editor of *Opera Australia*.

THEATRE/NSW



State Rep./Lucy Wagner, Exec. Editor

Minimum standard

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD MAN

by Michele Field

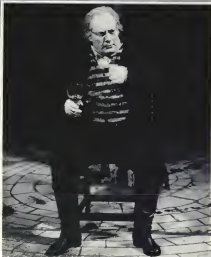
The House of the Dead Man by John Anthony King. Revised. Theatre Company, Sydney NSW. Opened 12 March 1988.

Director: John Bell. Designers: Ross Carpenter. Lighting Designer: Keith Robertson. Stage Manager: Neil Simpson.

Producers/Directors: Brian McDermott. Drama Librettists: Kerry Walker. Music: Vincent Caruso. Juries: Paul Harrison. Drama Consultants: Deborah Bentley, Glennie Joseph. Funder: Dorcas Artists. Brian Williamson. (Theatreworks)

As I watched *The House of the Dead Man*, I wondered whether documentary drama will ever dislodge the lion it has stalked in the bucket of realism. Here is a play professedly scripted, with a sharp eye for a powerfully dramatic anecdote, which somehow loses its point in the meanderings of conversation and monologue. It is natural to say the same things twice, particularly as an issue as important as one's own exile, but it is not dramatic. John Anthony King's play is awash with words just as inevitably as his itself is sometimes. Inevitably as his, but detrimentally so drama. This is a play that is two-thirds declamation, a play where the actors often are glancing up in hope of catching an eye in the audience.

Goey's declaim is a symbol of this propensity for declamation. Because the central character who is never off the stage is dead, another character onstage may speak to himself or speak to the audience without interrupting the line of action, a line of action entirely premised on Goey's "revelations". In the first act, I



Brian McDermott (Goey) in Richard's *The House of the Dead Man*. Photo: Sarah Edwards

held hopes that this might be an interesting extension of the Greek chorus, where two levels of comment alternate and each is oblique to the other. By the second act it seemed to have degenerated into an expedient for the playwrights: a way of avoiding more of those shouting-and-bugging situations which were recent to convey Goey's larger-than-life affability, his paternal affection for his one legitimate son, and his self-confidence in the face of Catholic inquisitions, kings, women, and other inferior Estates.

The House of the Dead Man prompts an analogy with Shaw's *Shaw Jones*. Both plays are set in roughly the same period, and both pit the individual free-thinking artist against the Church and the Establishment. Shaw is as woolly as John Anthony King, but much more to a

purpose. It is the lack of French, the satisfying squelching of the Establishment opposition with a flash of wit, that is missing in King's play. In a very forgettable line, for example, Goey's lechery is described by his mistress as "Tengen everywhere" - he should have been an octopus. King's lines don't click, they drip.

The design of the production works, but the actors seem to move chairs almost as much as they speak their words. Two-thirds of the chairs are hung from the ceiling of the scene, thankfully out of the actors' reach. My interpretation of the chairs was that they represented absent bodies - the public and lookers-on like ourselves. But if that was the symbol intended, it wasn't imbedded deeply enough in the text of the play to justify the

distraction of so many chair legs overhead. Clegg's house seemed to be worth defending, in terms of the play, because it was an ivory tower of free-thought, where the ghosts of the Establishment were not gawking down from the black chairs above us.

Only John Bell could have filled this production with so much entertainment. Bell's talent, for stage business — the lampoon fall of surprise that come out and the wince-action of wine-poseurs — are wonderful. Watching his stage business is perhaps our way of finding our own entertainment in a play like this one which plots from passage to passage, while in a play where the pace is faster we take the wage business for granted.

Both *Transcend* by Stephen Sewell as the Murred Downstairs and *The House of the Deaf Man Upstairs* are by Australian playwrights about subjects that are very far removed from Australian history. When Louis Nowra ventured off the turf of Australian history a few years ago, it was a novelty in Australian playwrighting; now we seem to accept it as usual. Both *Transcend* and *House of the Deaf Man* very heavily grasp the exotic style of their foreign subjects. But *Transcend* handles its subject in idiomatic language that retains Australian phrases and rhythms, whereas *The House of the Deaf Man* in its UNESCO show fails to be an Australian play in this sense. King and other playwrights should tackle subjects as ambitious as this one, but *The*

House of the Deaf Man should be established as a minimum-standard of what we want from documentary drama.

Weight of creative talent

CAPTAIN LAZAR AND HIS EARTHBOUND CIRCUS

by Barry O'Connor

Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus by Patrick Cook. Murrumbidgee Theatre of Australia. Sydney Opera House. Recording Hall. Opened March 18 1988.
Director: Richard Baylham. Company: Musical Director: Rodney Archer. Puppet masters: Ross Hall, Anne Smith. Set design: Russell Lawrence. Lighting: Nigel Macgregor. Tim Cook. Puppeteers: Allen Blythfield, Geoff Kates, Gary Hilger, John Karing, Linda Kayman. Captain Lazar: David Terry. Barnaby: Andrew de Tregay. Peter: Daniel-Battler, Sue Bailey. (Professional)

From the Adelaide Festival to the Sydney Opera House comes *Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus*, "an adult puppet industry" which brings to paper master life Patrick Cook's *National Times* column. This Cook-Archer-Baylham satire about a monkey circus being taken as a kind of national pilgrimage to a remote place called Oonahra, seems have touched a few nerves recently in an Adelaide still smarting from the

Christopher Hitchens/Bar Oonahra in a reactionary backwater of philistinism and complacency, hardly our Adelaide of detritus and thistles, don't I hear you protest?

The satire falls with unequal success on specific political figures and general social types. Some puppets offer incisive caricatures of prominent Canberra identities, but these go no further than an obvious (albeit unconvincing) physical imitation.

One, the Great Orlando, is an MC who arbitrarily throws his weight around, a kind of Sir John the Conqueror, Morton Berman, a sort of Big Mal de Sade, stops his performing kooles (the darlings of the show) through their paces and has his eye on Lazar's circus.

If the personalised satire isn't down home, the general attack on Australian society is most confident. "It knocks the shit out of everybody," someone in the audience remarked. *Quixote*'s Rudy mayor, surrealists, war-wallowing Head-on-Trolley, and other citizens who are willing to put up with art, culture and theatre only if they don't have to pay for it, are a readily recognisable gallery of social grotesques that don't exist only in Patrick Cook's mordant imagination.

The *Earthbound Circus* clearly owes some of its outrageous humour to that other and very famous "Circus" — M Pythouk's Flying variety, in which an oblique debt is paid to the tale. There's a



sluggo Cockburn with a pinchant for G.D.S. But a head sense of fitting, the Mighty Elmore Queens, who fire his trucks out of a cannon, Dr Wigginton and his whole who stoiclogues Grand Opera, and the halved Hand of God which makes a stage managerial appearance from time to time. Mosher Beyingles is another, inspired observation, and I don't know whether merit credit should go to her creator or her operator (Jude Karing, no mean attraction her own right, was on the other end of Mosher B's artistic rod). Ma Beyingles' specialty is that she dances on the heads of her pet seats. The heads? "Well of course you'd fall off dancing anywhere else", she argues with irrefutable logic.

The problem with *Captain Lazar* is its embellishment of material, which is probably due to the weight of creative talent behind the enterprise. Effectiveness depends on discipline in style and subject. A rather wimpy script and the creative operating limitations of red-propps seemed to militate against this. There are, I happily and loudly confess, moments of jaw-dropping truth and wit, most of the evening is like that. Unfortunately there are interludes which are best endured with a blood uncle and grumpy snort.

It's a pity, too, that the second half of the programme is less exciting than the first. Captain Lazar's presence has receded, and most of the circus acts have already been seen in rehearsal, as it were, in the first act. Some acts could have been made, I suggest.

The Recording Studio at the Opera House is not a happy home for the *Farinford Circus*. The cold, sterile atmosphere did not help disguise Russell Emerson's subtle humor. Nor did the high seated audience make the work of the speakers and the Captain Lazar Band any easier.

Here then is an opportunity to see a unique kind of theatre, one that I hope the MTA will develop and refine in the light of its present experience.

Disappointingly incoherent

THE IMAGINARY INVALID

by Lucy Wagner

The Imaginary Invalid by Moliere, adapted by Ben Dancer and the company Hunter Valley Theatre Company, Newcastle NSW. Closed 12 March 1980.
Director: Aarne Neume. Music: Aileen McFadden. Set designer: Eileen D'Arcy. Costumes: Carling Jones. Production manager: John Woodhead. Stage Manager: Alan Cameron.
Actors: Michael Taper, Peter, Sam Newey, Angeline

London. Cui Lederman. Inside dancer: Allen McFadden. Costume designer: David Wood. Dancers: Pagan, Ben Martin, Frank Garfield. Producer: Mylenny Morgan.
(Preproduction)

Before announcing the 1980 programme for the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, its new artistic director Aarne Neume stated that his season would include a Shakespeare, a tried Australian play, a new Australian play, a modern overseas play and another classic. It was a surprise when he chose the "other classic" to kick off with, Moliere's *Imaginary Invalid*. I hardly missed the play with which to woo and win a contrasting Hunter Valley audience, particularly from a season which contains such popular works as *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*.

Clearly the intention was to play this witty comedy of manners as populist, knockabout farce in sub-commercial style. Mingling against this was the fact that the script used, although credited as "adapted by Ken Duffin and the company", corresponds almost exactly to the 1939 Penguin translation by John Wood, which though no doubt an admirable rendition of the French for students, is quite inappropriate as a modern acting script. Tony Harrison's adaptation of *The Merchant* shows just how successful an updating of the language and the wit can be.

With this very laboured text the actors had great difficulty in extracting much humour from the lines themselves, and had mainly to rely on interpolated lachrymose jokes (Argan, on unwittingly drinking the contents of his chamber pot, "That's better than per Rhine gold") to prove that the play was written as a comic piece. Even Moliere's jokes at doctors and students had not been updated, and the purgative effect of the blue pencil would certainly have relieved the symptoms of boredom on many of the extended speeches, which of themselves are often no longer funny and restricted in their value.

Rather than tangle with the script in hard though, Aarne Neume chose to play it by eye, and the production was crisscrossed with visual gags. Frequently these did manage to get across a comic point which the script alone would fail to do, but equally there are many which seemed quite extraneous to the action and highlight little but the director's apparent lack of faith in the text.

The standard of performance was not as high nor as uniform as might be hoped for from a company engaged for the year's season. Cui Lederman (primarily Angelique, romantic heroine) and Frank Garfield (as the villain, local school) showed most potential for presence and versatility, and Mylenny Morgan as the mad

Tosette seemed mainly hampered by the clash between playing style and script. Gags across for the production Michael Taper (Argan) and Sam Newey (Belmont), both of whom have previously given highly successful comic performances in Newcastle, were unusually low-key and seemed curiously ill at ease as the by-the-hand-rascal avoided and his hypocritical wife.

Overall the enterprise was strongly that of a production put together in a hurry, and with a need to cut corners. The set consisted of a few props before a bright yellow back wall (perhaps symbolic of more of yet Rhine Gold?) against which few of the costumes were strong enough to stand out. Though the women's dress appeared to aim for a consistent period style, that of the men ran the gamut from Tudor breeches and powns to modern day suits with lace collars attached. This clash of styles manifested itself in all areas from performance to program and was the major cause of a disappointingly incoherent first production of this year for the HVTC.

Triumphant occasion

BOYS OWN MIGHT

by Andrew Wittle

Boys Own MIGHT by Catherine Bond and Jim Burton. Hunter Valley Theatre Company. Newcastle NSW. Closed 12 March 1980.
Director: Peter Bending. Set design: Tony Barden. Costumes: Helen May and Sylvia Foxman. Music: Steven John. Movement: with live support music from The Lungs, Under Agent, and Legions. Additional musicians: Bill Ferguson, Wayne Ferguson and John McKeown.
Musicians: Benjamin Franklin Derry, Andrew Burton, David MacNicol, Greg Gray, Tony Stuart, Murray MacNicol, Brian May, Brian May, Brian May, Brian May.
(Preproduction)

In deciding to open the Riverbank Trucking Company's 1980 season with *Boys Own MIGHT* — the first non-metropolitan production of this show — artistic director Peter Bending must at least have recognised the possibility that local resources might not have been equal to the special demands of this rock extravaganza over loose story or costings.

Balance against that consideration must have been the undeniable prospect of audience appeal — an important aspect at any time, but especially in the case of a regional professional company that has experienced its fair share of ups and downs in recent years, and which desperately needs an injection of audience support if it is to live and grow beyond the current season.



Greg Kerr (left), Stuart McCann (center) and Andrew Wilson as RSC's Boys Own Melbeth

On both counts Barclay came up with a winner. At times of wronging the opening riffs was a momentous occasion in which musical, acting and directorial values conspired to suggest the knockabout camp was set for a successful run, with the crash of percussion being counterpointed up double by the gender but equally hysterical talking of the cash register.

My Flesh couldn't succeed, but it does. Aethers Bond and Burnett have roped together an anecdotal wisp of events in a sort of everyday educational stylism, laced the storyline liberally with rock music, and more or less let it sit. The script, for instance, neglects such mundane matters as entrance and exit cues, and for this production the entire music score, except for a freely composed track, was evolved by transcribing from an LP recording.

Peter Barclay recorded in welding excellent musical and acting elements into a coherent package. Rogerian Franklin's Headmaster was consistently funny, alive to the nuances of fuzzy authoritarianism and woadside cheerfulness, and Stuart McCann's Terry Shakespeare, a student of thirty six years' standing at Old Downhouse, combined ferring nonchalance

and brash cunning in an engagingly paced performance.

I trust Ken Moffat will not misinterpret my comment that his version of the camp drama teacher Elton was delightfully fry. Young Tracy Russell showed nice understated style and a clear singing voice as Merle McBeth, while John Rossignol and a large contingent of onstage and offstage musicians collaborated in a buoyantly supercharged performance of the rock-flavoured score.

If one adds the virtues of imaginative staging and costumes as well as the changing pace of the production, it might seem that little more remains to be said. Yet on the evidence of this production *Boys Own My Flesh* seems to me first and foremost a rock show. Its script is thin, its humour attenuated, after a while the scholastic gestures tend to lose impact, and there's little or no compensatory interest in the plot.

But this production succeeded through the happy coincidence of excellent musical, acting and directorial values. What will now be emerging for RSC's audience will be to see how Barclay fares with a play requiring exploration of character as a first consideration.

Naive but exciting

NEW BLOOD

by Tom Barrell

New Blood created by improvisation by Space Group Performance, Cleveland Performing Arts, Sydney NSW. Opened in March 1988.

Production: Mike Madden, Visual Arts, Seth Jensen, Audio Environment, Michael Carter, Assistant, Lighting and Sound Operator: Michael Ruggersford.

Performers: Rob Thompson, Anita Ryan, Michael Link, Peter Flynn, Maureen McGrath (unofficially).

New Blood is a performance piece created, the programme tells us, through a technique based on improvisation and through group collaboration by Space Group Performance. It consists of a (stretchy) thematically linked series of images, centring on the continuing violence at the heart of Australian life. That's a very bold summary, of course, of what is a poetically conceived show, linked together associatively rather than logically.

The images are not static tableaux. The performers use dance-like precision of



Wesley McCreath as Space Dump's New Blood

movement, and "big", overstated gesture to fit in with the scale of the "set" and to become the mobile elements of the overall visual composition. The clearest of these images employ a grandly ironic juxtaposition: a child holds up excitedly a Barbie Man toy just unwrapped from its Christmas paper while behind him his Digger father gazes with equal rapture at a can of beer. Others are less clear but still oddly powerful: the young pilgrim with kiltsock and overcoat book plods in over drumming circles, exhausted, through the sand (the playing space is covered with real sand). Gradually an arm appears out of the sand. Surprised enough. But the hand is revealed as belonging to a Leleuser clad in the Australian flag who attacks the young man.

Unfortunately the show I saw had no "audio environment" in the second half. That could be one reason why I found the first half more stimulating. The terminology is significant, not music or effects, but "audio environment". The whole evening had a strong smell of avant-garde preciousness or at least it did when the Space Dump people were rather far up themselves at times. Communication with the audience did not always take precedence over self-indulgent objectivity.

But there is originality and genuine theatrical force in *New Blood*. Perhaps necessarily the images of the past were more intelligible, sharper and wittier than those of the future. In the first section we often saw a mythic clarity like that of some Australian painters (Drysdale, Boyd). In the second half the ghost of Lindsay Kemp haunted two acts, especially in the Meen Lisa in the Desert sequence, with its white staked-out faces and mocked operatic alienating. The opening sequence was typical of the best. It was Ten Centenary, in which the khaki-clad digger drags the Union Jack trunk across the desert accompanied by his Davy's Wife cousin. As the partner couple drink tea from lovely china the Aboriginal appears as ceremonial dignity with woomera and spears, and stands calmly in the sand. The Digger raises his rifle but the Wife hands him a bottle instead, which he offers to the black man with a knowing smile.

Many of the best effects can not be summarised, since they did depend on a genuinely creative integration of elements (spectral, physical, vocal).

But I do have some reservations. The quality of speech admittedly little of it though there was, was far inferior to the quality of the movement, although the

Arnew's timing of drunkenness looked far more like spontaneity. More importantly, I don't think *New Blood* itself knows what it wants to say. Its analysis of any Australian plight (and it takes on nothing less than that) is hazy, unfinished. It is dedicated to "the original inhabitants of this island and this" (ish), but the Aboriginal was too often merely a black body or a frightening presence to white eyes. If "Tain Marrow" is an Aboriginal, how is this to come about? Not, I think, merely through indulging in images of fire-bombing the Opera House.

Space Dump needs to look as hard at its politics as it has at its aesthetics if "poetic" suggestions are not to become political tokenism or even unconscious exploitation. If you bring on Agent Orange, The Bomb and the Black Man then it seems to me you have a responsibility to go beyond just using them as poetic faces in your gesture-show.

But *New Blood* is stimulating and inventive theatre, with a visual quality and a physicality all too rare in Sydney theatre. Given the unadventurousness which so often goes with "high professional standards", this experiment, for all its variety of analysis is an exciting development.

THEATRE/QLD



Don Batchelor/State Rep

Organic stylisation

ALEX, OR THE AUTOMATIC TRIAL

by Veronica Kelly

Alex or the Automatic Trial by Ian Watson from the novel *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess. The Company. Twelfth Night Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened 21 March 1980.

Director: Jeffa Milnes. Assistant and choreographer: Judith Anderson. Designer: David Neil Lyphard. Scripted Actor: Stage Manager: David Milward. Alex: Geoff Curragh. Norman: Gary Cook, with Steve Simmonds. Mycroft: Colin Duncan. Piss: Kelly McKinnon. Judith Anderson.

(Photographs)

With the popularity of Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange* and Kubrick's subsequent high-camp film version, the basic plot of *Alex* can hold surprises for only a very few. Ian Watson's play carries a firm didactic line through the tough analogies of the novel, presenting a violent society whose repressive institutions merely make it large the organic carnivals of mayhem carried out by Alex and his fellow Droogs. Alex's character is posited on an initial choice of the pleasures of violence which he declares an essentially free and valid, after his "rehabilitation" his one voluntary choice is curtailed by social manipulation. The problem of how humanity — as here given — can truly choose the good without the coercive intervention of an authoritarian Guller is left to the audience to ponder. The play leaves the central problem of moral choice halfway through the novel's development. The vicious young hood remains as eager as ever to choose evil, but is now prevented by chemically-conditioned pains in the gutty-

warts from achieving his aims. The play leaves him there, howling "It's not fair!" as indeed it is not. Given Burgess' progressively Manichaean view of human nature, closely followed in the dramatization, the poor little runt never had a prayer.

The TN Company's production displays most rewardingly the focus of its ensemble policy. *Alex* is a physically demanding show relying largely on scene techniques, especially vital for the expression of the thematically musical and nervous Ultraviolence. The stylisation is organic to those scenes where the physical and indeed aesthetic delights of violence must be expressed from Alex's viewpoint. Judith Anderson's choreography conveys the ambivalent significance through the Droogs' routine night's work of tagging, tagging, tagging and beating. The group-fight in the first half of the show is a particular triumph. The second part of the action, with Alex as the grip of unacknowledged violence, removes the balletic distancing and goes to the business of the theme unadorned.

The cast of young actors cohere with a precision and intensity which are a rare delight; their energy never falters from

beginning to end. The production capitalises on the edge of their physicality which Australian actors have over many other national traditions, rendering one

if such a skill needed — that there is infinitely more scope for stage movement than crosses from the chair-lounger to the cocktail cabinet. The sensuality and electricity generated by this can project right into the sometimes deadening gloom of the Twelfth Night auditorium, making of the production a truly authentic theatrical event.

Amongst the fine work offered by the actors it is no disrespect to single out Geoff Curragh's performance as one of outstanding merit, marking an advanced stage in this actor's excellent work. His charismatic Alex graduates from cold-shouldering menace to craven victimisation without losing the character's natural backbone of willful evil. There is no easy playing for sympathy; the gleam of violence and power is contained by the overall concept of Alex as a crippled moral creature. With Milnes's company continuing to foster the growth of emerging young talent there must be many more such feats in the night to anticipate in the months ahead.



THEATRE/SA



Susan Vili/State Rep

In touch with dramatic roots

THE MYSTERY PLAYS

by Robert Page

The Modern Plays of Wakefield State Theatre Company for the 1983 Adelaide Festival Playhouse, Adelaide, SA, opened 4 March 1983.

Director: Colin George. Designers: Hugh Coleman. Lighting: Nigel Leding. Movement: Michael Fuller. Cost: Dennis Olsen, Daphne Gray, Kerin Miles. Public Relations: David Marshall. Admin: David Holmes. Michael Fuller, Robert Grubb, Thomas James, Wayne Jarrett, James Leslie, Joanne Lyons, Christine Mahoney, Tony Pottle, Philip Quinn, John Saunders, Peter Scherer, Michele Sawyer.

(Professionally)

It is rare for theatre companies to risk presenting dramas of epic proportions. The greatest crime is to bore an audience and the longer they are kept in their seats the more likely the transgression. Yet when it comes off the effect is woodruse — the Old Tote's *Norman Conquests*, the MTC's marathon *Ducktology*, Nimrod's *Merry IV* parts *J* and *M*, and now the State Theatre Company of South Australia's *Wakefield Mystery Plays*.

There is a fallacy to the event, the sense of having gone through so much with the performers, that in satisfying — almost wholesome — five hours was the span of this production, a long time to spend in a theatre, but so nothing in the scope of the Cycle, an epic which takes no less than Creation to Judgement. As originally presented with the thirty-two plays, and from which about a third was taken and reshaped for this production, several days would have been required to stage the whole.

Yet these plays are the very wet lighting of drama in the English speaking world. They

interpret *The Bible*, the basic document of the western world's Christian tradition, as the Greek playwrights dramatised incidents from their mythologies, *The Mael* and *The Gospels*. They are our Noah and Kakeke rolled into one. Yet it is extraordinary how recently (in the past thirty years) they have come to be known and still how rarely, even in England, they are performed. The Greeks, whose influence came relatively late and via Europe during the renaissance, have fared much better.

Shakespeare's works, from a classical point of view, are "plum puddings" (Tolstoy); these plays show as the true tradition out of which he was writing one which allows the mix of comedy with



John Saunders, Daphne Gray, Dennis Olsen as Christ, Peter, David Wilson

the highest seriousness. To see the plays then, is not just to be amazed by the truth of their subject, estranged by the clash of good and evil throughout history, or entranced by the vigour and veneer of the text, but to be put back in touch with our dramatic roots.

Here is the theatrical equivalent of such magnificent edifices as the cathedrals of Chartres or Notre Dame, the writings of Aquinas and poetry of Chaucer, the institution of the university and parliamentary system, it doesn't do to be too readily patronising of the medieval period.

With the whole history of salvation to portray the attempt could easily collapse into the slipshod of the episodic. Colin George has masterfully avoided the pitfall by updating his text into three. Theatricality the high point is the opening act — Creation through to the Newby Designer Hugh Coleman could have gone for *Star*

Wars / *Superman*-type indulgence, especially for the Creation. Instead, though lighting effects, projections and the rest of the theatricalist armory is not neglected, he aims for, relatively, the simply impressive and sure of effect.

The second part (after a supper break) is concerned with the story of Christ depending wholly on the drama of an central figure. Dennis Olsen achieved a powerful stature and moving serenity in a part which until the recent relaxation of censorship laws has been banned from our stages since medieval times.

The concluding section is made up of the Resurrection, the Meeting of Mary in the Garden, the Visitation to the apostles and the Judgement. The finale is a vision of harmony and hope, a glorious tableau of mankind's ultimate redemption.

The disparate historical periods were given coherence by dress (calico suits as a base), style (presentational, "formal spring") and the set. With minor variations, eg Noah's splendid cut-out ark, the open stage held only a set of towering scaffolding stairways leading up to a platform holding the cross. Unquestionably this dominated the action below and around it. Of course a single stage itself helped unity, though actually, despite the suggestion to the contrary in the programme, it is now thought more likely that the original was given at a single venue rather than travelled on wagons from station to station as is the common belief.

Colin George should receive accolades not only for masterminding the whole, and a clear vision and strong sense of direction throughout, but for according these plays the full dignity of treatment they deserve.

His actors served him well in this, creating a strong sense of ensemble, vigorous, though never cheaply knockabout, bold, though avoiding the simplistic, and aware, without overstatement. Two names, apart from Olsen, stand out: the redoubtable Kevin Miles who carried all the evil parts (Lazarus, Mark, Herod, Judas) and Robert Grubb, brilliant as the pious Noah, a comic shepherd and the steady-eyed pharisee Capharna.

Happily this production will send many more devotees back to our dramatic roots. What they will find is the hand of theatre it has taken Boettcher et al to bring to the twentieth century, a theatre of freshness and vigour, of every conceivable staging form and a presentational style of performance which is the theatre truly being itself — and which has so long been obscured by assimilation.

Joyous exploitation

PETER BROOK'S CICT COMPANY

by Susan Yell

L'Œ by Roger Diop, translated by Jean-Claude Carrière

Ubu by Alfred Assol, translated by Jean-Claude Carrière

The M adapted by Colin Higgins and Simon Corman from *The African People* by Cécile Tardiff

The Conference of the Birds translated by Jean-Claude Carrière from the 12th-century Persian poem by Farid al-Din Attar

Director: Peter Brook. Musicians: Marc-Cécile Lelièvre, Rodolphe Tournier

Cities for International Theatre Creation, Adelaide Festival. Anatomy Hill Quarry, S.A. Opening 12 March 1980

Cast: Drs William Malick Hewson, Miriam Goldschmidt, Andreas Katsulas, Astrid Leppert, Bob Lloyd, Mireille Minkoff, Alan Marshall, Bruce Myers, David Olan, Natalie Perry, Jean-Claude Pons, Yvonne Sedley



CICT's *L'Œ* — an African force with a rural setting

At an open dialogue during the Adelaide Festival, Peter Brook remarked that theatre was a meeting-point of contradictions. One had to see all three of the CICT programmes to appreciate the range of contradictions that this company has been able to absorb, contain and create in a form designed to accommodate difference without compromise. Harmonies of opposition remain separate, individual, so that the result is not the mediocrity of mean average, but a vigorous whole which can swing from one extreme to another in a moment. The unpredictability which follows makes for intense, heightened theatre.

The most obvious contradiction is nationality. One quickly accepts the variety of accents and faces, missing only when mispronunciation is a bar to understanding. It was another element of difference in a theatre space which had already signalled nonconformity, the unexpected warmth and intimacy of Anatomy Hill Quarry, together with the unprepared rejection of all things artificial, had people beforehand poring and talking together, especially at the evening shows, with a sense of mutual adventure for audience and actors alike. The actors took the same spirit the audience had crossed minutes before. A space newly entered and ruled for *The Conference of the Birds* so that each step became a mark on the journey from ignorance to enlightenment; and, in the end, the ground was patterned with hundreds of prints, mingling and indistinguishable.

Before an audience primed and receptive, the company presented three contrasted programmes. The first, *Illings*

Diop's *L'Œ* and Jerry's *Ubu*, commented on the comic, earthy spirit. Here contradiction was built in to the material in each play: human weakness — stubbornness, pride, greed — brought about an unexpected turn of events which meant the downfall of the villain. Acting was bold and inventive, the responding laughter spontaneous and unbridled. The language was a mixture of French and English, some of the English laugh-lines being all the more hilarious for their emergence after a context of French.

In *L'Œ*, an African folk-tale concerning the greed of a man for a horse, Malick Hewson from Minkoff animated the central figure with knowing villainy, while Mireille Minkoff gave an astonishing performance as his wife, abruptly changing the mood from pure comedy to the horror of tragedy as she realised her husband had gone too far in his stubborn pride.

Ubu exploited in production the sense of absurdity that is already in the play. *Ubu* of black became food, talk of the walls of a hut. The actors knew it was only black, and we knew the actors knew, and out of this shared knowledge sprang common amusement on all levels. Led by Andreas Katsulas and Miriam Goldschmidt as Perc and Mire Ubu, with a brilliantly funny score of escape from Bruce Myers, the actors were simultaneously absorbed in and aware of their craft, at once playing in character and reaching to the audience.

This dual level of awareness was less evident in *The M* where the actors in effect became the people they were playing. Perhaps the time had the weight of solemnity, from a wooden hut constructed before our eyes to the campy-table and chair used

by the white anthropologist. Such was the semblance of reality that I found myself stirred by gestures of obvious fiction, like the mixing of tea with water that clearly had not boiled. A nervous reaction, prompted by the apparent negation of all presence in acting or art. In the end, I found this was the least satisfying of all the plays, since it set up expectations which it could not possibly fulfil. I could be moved by the subject-matter of an African tribe left to starve, but not by its presentation in this way, lacking the intensity that gives an edge to stage life.

As a meeting-point of contradictions, *The Conference of the Birds* was a triumph. It combined the folk-tale simplicity of *L'Œ*, the serious analysis of *The M* and the dual awareness of metaphor that we had seen in *Ubu*. On one level a basic tale of the birds who undertake a hazardous journey in search of the Simorgh, on another a parable of mysticism which opens out to embrace all existence, breaking down barriers of time and space. Similarly, the use of masks, human puppets, props and, above all, the birds themselves, took on the pure beauty of desirable symbols, at once clear and simple, yet capable of infinite contemplation. The performance, too, was left with the tranquillity of having passed through a spiritual experience and applause seemed out of place.

The range of approach and intention in these plays was extraordinary. What they had in common was a fundamental truthfulness, a trust in the material, and a head with the audience in a joyous exploration of all that theatre can do and film can't.

Self-indulgent pageant

LA CLACA — MORE EL MERMA

by William Shakespeare

With all the approbation that the critics had heaped on the La Claca Theatre Company from Catalonia, one could have reasonably expected *More el Merma* to be a cogent and gripping theatrical satire on dictatorship in general and Francoism in particular. An evening of potent drama both vocal and dramatic.

Also, the notices were again an example of critics operating in their own emotions. I have never seen so many members of an audience spine to begin with, start diving for the exits, not out of outrage and disaffection as some would have it, but rather out of sheer unadulterated boredom. Even the Spanish senior of the audience was left floundering as to what this elaborate charade was all about.

More el Merma as a theatre piece craves to cast about ten companies into an allotted time. The theme, content, territory and emotional climate has been all laid out and signalled ahead for miles in the opening scenes of court jockeys waiting for the arrival of the flowering poemster. This scene is enough to illustrate the lack of mind and initiative that tyranny engenders. We already presuppose that the poemster and the Dictator when they arrive are going to be grotesque and foolish and they are. What price originality?

The rest of the evening is taken up with inflating this initial nerve and more (or not) passionately left point of view.

At the end the whole scenario just flutters away into nothingness, like a deflating balloon, that's the only way the director Joan Branas can finish it. The Dictator himself the poetaster turn their backs on him and the Wife spits on his corpse, thus goes the way of all flesh.

The Adelaide Festival Trust is at fault for bringing out such a parochial and localised piece of theatre to this country, such foreign pieces rarely travel well. The signs of non-comprehension and lack of real common ground is too wide.

The Sydney Opera Trust is at fault for presenting the performance in the confines of the Opera Theatre. La Claca expects to draw an audience from the conventions of the street carnival theatre of Catalonia, it should therefore be made to perform in such surroundings, to contend with all the noise and distractions of an outside setting. To see it in the confines of a proscenium arch theatre is to

put the piece on the pedestal of art. In such a setting, one automatically expects such things as depth, progression and substantiation of theme. None of the occurs because it is not in the nature of the production to give us that.

More el Merma is not so much a narrative dance play/puppet show as a series of tableaux to be contemplated. What happens there is in it, is the humour of images and the juxtaposition of images. The Dictator's Wife is a woman dressed up like a huppopotamus, that is funny. Alas then with what she does or sees a "comedian" tortured and worn his flayed hide as a shield and one realises that the humour is the bitter humour of the grotesque.

There are black moments like this scattered throughout the tedious length of *More el Merma* but all the audience does is to sit them up at the end and go away with a vague impression of violence and sickness. So what, where does the energy and force for change come out of that?

The main trouble is that the director has allowed the wistful and round of painter Joan Miro to dominate at the expense of the production as a whole. This is often the mistake of those membered directors who think that by getting in a famous figure of the plastic arts to work on their performance art piece, the piece will thereby be enriched. Utterly wrongheaded.

Look at the way that Picasso's donor and influence for Miro's *Parade* dominated, overwhelmed and thereby destroyed that ballet or a ballet.

The same has happened with *More el Merma*, despite all the effort and attention of the cast, they become merely ciphers as Miro's self indulgent pagant of images from his own pastime.

Disappointing alternatives

TROUPE AND STAGE COMPANY

by Susan Vile

Almanac Canches and Mr. Park in Bohemia by Max Bann was most by Susan Vile, Stage Company Adelaide, SA. First Theatre Opened in March 1980. Directors: Brian Debusum, Musical Director: Simon Eddy, Designer: Andrew Longmire, Choreographer: Ray Lewis.

Act: Norman Ashton, Richard Lawrence with Warren Ball, Andrew Clark, Deborah Little, Alan Lewis, John Noble, Les and Ben, Joseph Scott-Baker, Josephine Wadsworth (Professionals).

Copyist and Composer by Simon Clark and David Allen, Troupe in the Red Shed, Adelaide SA. Opened at 11th March 1981.

Directors: David Allen, Designer: Paula Curran, Lighting: Richard Channery, Cost: George John Copps, John McFarlane with

Vigyan Baxter, Paula Curran, Ben Fisman, Bob Kato, Geoff Rensell, David Tyler (Prof. Act).

Marion's and Moll's House by David Lewis, Williams Troupe in the Red Shed, Adelaide SA. Opened 10 March 1980.

Directors: David Allen, Cost: Tony Hazzard, Henry Baker (Professionals).

1980 marks the first year that Adelaide's "alternative" theatre has been officially recognised through the inclusion in the Festival programme of both Troupe and the Stage Company. Perhaps such theatre would best when it remains on the "inner side", in any case, as it happened, the results of both were disappointing.

Stage Company opened for an ambitious undertaking in the production of *Norman London and Mr. Park in Bohemia*, an original play with music. Not at all your average musical, it was closer to modern opera with dialogue.

The form I found fascinating. Ken Ross's script, concentrating on eight years of Lindbergh's life, moved between the artist's personal world and his more public involvement in the futuristic social set. There were experiments with rhyming dialogue and song, a flash-back or two, and some strong verbal exchanges. It didn't all work. There were some fundamental faults like the lack of sufficient information to identify characters as they came and went. But there seemed a genuine attempt in the writing to reach out for a particular style. Over and through it all shined the impulse, unbridled praise of Simon Eddy's music, which, with its echoes of Kurt Weill and continual retuning of uncompleted themes, gave more of a sense of epicness and continuity than anything else in the play. Its chief drawback lay in the fact that it was extremely difficult to sing.

What happened overall was that the problems posed by script and music were too unwieldy for the company to handle. Brian Debusum's decision was pushing towards a Jack the Ripper type presentation: plenty of pasturing, large-scale caricature acting and a pervasive mood of gaudy. This might just have succeeded with a stronger cast, but only John Noble and Deborah Little were at all at home on stage and they, ironically, were both playing with a seriousness and depth that belied the grand approach. The end looked awkward and, at times, even embarrassing. Besides, the script did not require such over-the-top showing. Richard Lawrence, who spent most of the evening depicting apocryphal characters into the title role, only really came into his own in a dramatic scene with Deborah Little, where, for a few moments, something seemed to matter.

Almanac Longmire's design was attractive and functional but it was irritating that, despite a battery of lamps above, faces went frequently in shadow.

Trojan's Festival offering could scarcely be called a play. A loosely constructed series of scenes, it presented events in the life of George Coppin, actor and entrepreneur. Dennis Clarke and David Allen were reaching back to the days of musical-hall in their deliberately "comic" dialogue, but it was neither witty nor inherently dramatic enough to sustain an audience's amusement for long. Further, the general viewpoint was so objective as to inspire only indifference to the subject-matter. The acting was lively and energetic though it had an unpleasant busyness about it, at least one cast member, however, was clearly out of place. John McFadyen worked hard as Coppin, but could not compensate for lack of substance in the writing.

Far more worthwhile was David Allen's late-night Focus (Fringe) production of *Mancock's Last Half Hour* by Heathcote Williams. Here, a tight script, uncomplicated direction and correspondingly clear playing made for a night of intimacy and sadness. Henry Selzer used the comic's own speech rhythms to reproduce that special flavour of comedy that will always be Hancock's, and was able, too, to incorporate spontaneous ad lib into the natural flow of the writing without stepping out of character. Perhaps he missed those moments of total vulgarity which were a part of Hancock's technique, but this is equitable. Virtually alone, Henry Selzer rescued Trojan from despair this month and modestly restored his own reputation as an actor.

Losing some battles, but winning the war

FESTIVAL YOUTH THEATRE

by Chris Westwood

The official Young People's programme of the 1980 Adelaide Festival contained six major productions and a fine array of school three matinees of "adult" productions. CHRIS WESTWOOD returns here to the main pieces: *Loose of Sand* (Theatre des Jeunes Amois), *The Zig and Zag Father and Cain's Hand* (St Martin's Youth Arts Centre), *Fifty Children* (Mumsey's Little Darlings and Australian Dance Theatre), *King Sing* (State Theatre Company), and *The Two Fiddlers* (Adelaide Festival).

The joy of the Young People's programme at the Festival was that each production could be examined on "theatre" before looking at it in relation to children specifically. For this reason, it's clear that



Cain's Hand

theatre for young people has come a long way very fast, and compared with other Australian productions of the moment, these Festival ones measured up very well against my criteria for good theatre, working with moral intention rather than sheer frivolity, and ensuring not to let the work become too "self-referenced", attempting not to over-simplify notions of propaganda, but aiming at new directions in purifying and elevating its sense of art. Above all, the programme showed a challenging diversity of views and methods by which the dignity of children and adolescents might be affirmed in a cultural medium.

I suppose if there was any unifying theme which came out in the young people's programme it was that — brought out starkly at the Forum session called "Mother Goose or Propaganda" (and not followed through for problems of time), debate raged quietly about manipulation of young people. Annie Taylor represents most obviously one side of the argument: a director uses her/his voice in being through the message of young people. Maurice Yacot (*Theatre des Jeunes Amois*) takes the position that the psychic demands made on young people in this method are too hard and too dangerous (the children can accidentally be left looking scared or humiliated, or in order to protect them from that, they are forced into too rigid a form).

So Maurice Yacot (quite happy to take workshops with children) has a company of child/adult actors, and *The Loos of Sand* is a wonderful example of theatre talking as simply, directly, imaginatively and unapologetically as possible to and with children. It is a highly stylized anti-fairy story dealing with a theme that has so often escaped theatrical magic: the processes and perpetuation of conditioned gender-specific roles in life. There are four men (fairs), two women, two children, and a sewing machine woman. These *des Jeunes Amois*' commitment to art

prevents them from training their work to their propagandist aims — innocent images packed from traditional fairy stories and common cultural icons are woven with contemporary myths about men and women. Visually the production is an extraordinarily disciplined series of striking tableaux framed by an understated woman who sits at the side of the tableau, drawing the children in and out of the scenes and action, just as mothers guide their own children through a culture of fairy stories and moral lessons in real life. The simplicity and unparaphrasing respect for the children in the audience, and the lyrical beauty of the script, made this production exceptional in children's theatre. The passive ending, showing that real danger can be avoided, opened up new discussions in political theatre for me.

And so from that pared down but reverberant epilogue, to the rather clumsy layering of styles in *King Sing*, where the production seemed too clever, too insensitive to children's ways of going about the world. *King Sing* is an adaptation by Nick Knight of Carlo Gozzi's 18th Century fable *Il Re Corvo*. It was an audacious attempt to give children far too much, a base of the conservatism of Commedia dell'Arte, a filling of Oriental Kingdom fantasy, and as long as an Australian suburban housewife's appetites. Essentially, the piece is frivolous, containing only one element which might be of real interest to children: the transference myth (out of your body, into someone else's). Packed around the idea is a frenzy of action over which much of the play trips. There was some awful kinked anthropomorphism (a Panda lion-on-stage for no apparent reason) contributed by the stage in sloppily choreographed sequences, beats, in which the children in the audience were encouraged to help the beasts kill the beautiful things, a sprinkling of Delectable English (you want see my king, eh?), some appalling scenes

(where children were asked to choose between Truffaut's the lovable hero and Sméralda the terrible housewife from *Kagawoon*). Fortunately most of these uninitiated audiences are dropping out of children's theatre, and next Festival the State Theatre Company might lead rather than bring up the field, for they certainly have the talent.

On a spectrum in which style is a tool in *The Users of Savat*, or an end in itself as in *King Stag*, St Martin's Youth Arts Centre stands somewhere in the middle. Helmut Bakula's production of *Can's Mand* (the Goethe Institute prize winner of a play for young people) is a development in style a long way from *Carolina and Manzanita* and a short way from the *South Korea Show*. *Can's Mand* is a good example of a different strategy in theatre for young people, and an adventurous and challenging one at that. Of all the productions in the youth programme, *Can's Mand* maintains best the delicate balance in a director's adult fantasies and obsessions which is the recognition in young people, and tries to bring out spontaneously as well as disciplining all onto an entertaining theatrical form. On a shiny black diamond of a stage, three young women and four young men (in black vinyl with close cropped hair flushed with electric colouring, trap the audience into following with them a relentless path from frustration to anger to excitement to murder.

Allan MacKay's play seems reasonably well written, but it is Helmut Bakula's direction which lifts it from a promise and naturalistic piece demanding conventional theatrical clichés and predictable outcomes exploits into challenging theatre. One of Helmut's great skills as a director lies in his ability to avoid the trap of using youth theatre as conventional standards of "professionalism". He does not exploit the actors to extract formal achievements in voice and movement perfection. Instead, and with a discipline for theatrical discipline, he has directed this play to allow out a raw energy, a spontaneous vulnerability in the young not disparaging in the tough reader dichotomy of Mark Loughran. My quarrel with the style of this production, and it comes out more clearly in *The Zig and Zag Fiddlers*, is that Helmut has gone a touch too far. How the production is perceived is not how (I think) it is intended. The physical production is alive and contradictory to its message. If the play is trying to encourage the adults in the audience ("The play is directed as much at parents as at young people themselves"), to frighten them into re-examining their responsibilities (as a vet places for kids to hang out, adult drug pushers, parents who have gone flying around), then the style of the production lets them off the hook too

early. By removing elements of recognition through a fairly outrageous style, the young people in the play can be dismissed by adults as nothing to do with their kids. Matty is not an ordinary kid (even in the futuristic scene because he is tied to contemporary language and problems) — at least, he is not quite close enough to home to be identifiable.

Yet the style Helmut is developing is awesome: it is powerful, it treats young people with complete seriousness and respect, it confronts honesty with fantasies, lust and violence without sensationalism, without employing the easy emotions of the Russian Doctors, it does not run away into a Junior Documentary mode. I worry though that there is a danger of falling into a trap of a tyranny of signs, a trap where the compulsion to be liberated from the old might not be equally as repressive. It's right and bold to slot into contemporary signs and symbols and myths, but it might be too



Clara Hunt

confusing if it slotted into a specific cultural reference as this play is. Despite my reservations, this production stands high and should challenge Australian theatre in general, not only youth theatre productions.

The sets for both St Martin's productions were designed by Nigel Triffin, using the base of the set for *The Two Fiddlers*. Nigel is a very "professional" designer, and his work is very much a living and integral part of any production he is involved with. His too seems to be trying out his fantasies against those he recognises in children, and has a good sense of what they will enjoy. Peter Maxwell-Davies' opera inspired the Festival to put together an amazing team: Helmut Bakula, Nigel Triffin, Dean Patterson, Jenny Tate, Arlette Taylor, Martin Smith, Penny Chapman, Andrew Hebb, Linda Rana — and I say any young people who have had the chance of working with this crowd as they did in *The*

Two Fiddlers. Over forty schools (over ninety kids named in the programme) were responsible for all aspects of the production, and it is eight years away from the traditional "school play" notion. Helmut Bakula picked up an Maxwell Davies' score for rough and unsmoothed voices (judging a German production which divided it was too hard for young people and got professional opera singers in the principal roles), which gave the opera a freshness and naivete not originating in sentimentalism, awkwardness or self-consciousness. More than anything, *The Two Fiddlers* was a triumph for music education in South Australia, and now that some composers may have seen what can be achieved, they might be encouraged to write some new, challenging and exciting work for young performers.

And finally, to *Filks Children*, presented by Murray's Little Dashiels and the Australian Dance Theatre, a production in which the director shaped children's raw ideas and feelings against her own notion of good theatre, with sensitivity, wit and dignity. Arlette Taylor's methods and strategies are formal to the extent that she is quite prepared "to break a heart for ten minutes if it means the part looks and works better". However, Arlette's is perhaps the exception that proves the rule that it is sometimes better to translate a child's ideas into a theatrical compromise determined by a director, which makes the piece more articulate and less stumbling than if it came out of the mouth of a child. There certainly was a real vigor, toughness and honesty in *Filks Children*, and a real spontaneity which moved the audience (adults and children) about the rights of the child. I'd like to think that Arlette's production prevented sentimentality, given that so many little girls who learn ballet have already decided they know exactly what adults want to see and hear. I don't think, after seeing the production, that the children's passions and rights and integrity were in any way compromised by Arlette's direction. It will be very interesting to see the next production (*Give Us Trust*) about teenagers, who may or may not accept this method of work. In any case, *Filks Children* is a remarkable work which leaves a lot of other Australian contemporary dance for dead.

All power to the Festival for providing such a variety of approaches to theatre for young people. Each had a freshness, a real sense of searching for a means by which to educate and to entertain, none were quite as frivolous or manipulative as children's television today, and all of them must be having some effect on revitalising Australian theatre as the young performers and audiences grow up demanding a live and challenging theatre.

THEATRE/VIC



State Rep/Suzanne Spender

Taut and elegant production

UPSIDE DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

by Colin Duckworth

Upside Down is the *Bottom* of the World? David Allen Murphy's Melbourne 'No Gender' 21 March 1990

Director: Murray Copeland *Designer:* Judith Tate
Lighting: Robert Gohari
D: H. Lawrence, Gertrude Lawrence, Freda von Rosenfeld, Lady Davies, Jack, Peter Poshon, Victoria Kinley Child
(Production)

The trouble with documentary (or semi-such) biographical drama is that, when the writer is willing to be accused, like Macbeth of unfair distortion of fact, his field of imaginative exploration is bounded by his models. So, given two explosive and articulate people as D H Lawrence and Freda, one would expect their battle of mutual (re)inventing to rival those of *Albee's* George and Martha in inventiveness, variety, and ingenuity. One could even forgive a little dramatic licence in the moments of dramatic tension and their verbal pyrotechnics that go beyond "You talk with words" "Don't be so vulgar". But David Allen's script, despite its confidence in other respects, falls into repetitiveness and predictability in the Lawrence-Freda confrontations.

The physical limitations of the setting — the little town of Tharalson upon which the Lawrence descended disconcertingly in 1922 — are sustained by occasional flashbacks, with the two supporting players doubling up in cameo parts. The techniques and the subject-matter invite comparison with Brian McFadden's *Two*

Tigers, in which Lawrence and Freda form part of the background to the Mandarini-Murray love story. Allen's play lacks the variety and breadth of McFadden's, but admittedly he can't be blamed for trying to fit the tensions created by contrasting sexual and political attitudes within a single episode of Lawrence's life, and, incidentally, to present a view of small-town Australia as seen by two outsiders, English and German.

The shocked reactions of the locals, represented by Jack and his wife, Victoria, are not particularly Australian (if it were had been a small town in Wales or Dorset, Lawrence and Freda would have been met with the same disapproving prudishness). But the revealing difference lies in the warmth and friendliness with which two strangers are received by their *Amos* neighbours (played with engaging physics by Kerry Child, and with care, convincing direction by Peter Poshon).

For their connection, authenticity and believability, Lady Davies (as *delights* the "Tenderness") Freda. She had mastered her German accent extremely well; thus enabling her (and us) to settle confidently into her amorous, moxy, amoral, blowy wood-nymph sexuality. She and Charlie Gahner (as *intense*,

arrogant, egotistic, but heated and vulnerable Lawrence) managed the mercurial switches from jollity to violence (verbal and physical) with great dexterity. They actually convinced one that a relationship can survive that much reciprocal abuse. Present and absent are a remarkably resilience which earns their mutual respect.

The overt violence of the visitors' life together is treated as a counterpoint to the latent violence running through Australian society at that time. If the play's entry into the time-scale stems from its impending departure from Tharalson, its theme lies in the analogy between sexual and political violence. Jack, the pathologist policeman-banker, accuses the shocked Lawrence of being politically passive only because he isn't — *via* Freda — as a substitute outlet for violence. If only the world's conflicts could be resolved by voluntary leading couples.

With only a small platform of rough planks, a deck-chair and a picnic-basket, Murray Copeland achieved a production of exemplary unness and elegance, even using to advantage the lack of space between front-stage and front row. Peter Southrop's music ("Small Town") was admirably chosen.



Peter Poshon (Jack), Kerry Child (Victoria) and Charlie Gahner (Lawrence) in *Murphy's Upside Down*. Photo: Jeff Berth.

What's it all about Reggie?

SON OF BETTY

by Suzanne Spanner

Son Of Betty by Ray Livermore for Women's Theatre Australia, Vic. Opened March 1980
Director: Peter Barry, Designer: Garry Cox
Choreographer: Karen Johnson, Musical Director: Peter Knapp, Music by The Wellington Baytells.
Performers: Eric Drew
Starring: Ray Livermore
(Professional)

Never having seen Ray Livermore before, I came to *Son Of Betty* unimpressed by immediate comparisons with his earlier shows, *Bests: Shit! Better Poles!*, *Womans' Women* and *Sacred Cow*, which was perhaps a good thing as this show is a compilation of highlights from its predecessors with the addition of some new material. There can be no deeping

either Livermore's popularity or the manifest slickness of the show, both the audience he draws and the stage reactions he commands are vast to the point of hubris for a "one man show".

What then of the show? I was by turns entertained and bored, enjoying the flash theatricality but annoyed by the message of padding and overall theatrics of the event, but the thing that really held my attention was the show's political content and the ambivalence of Livermore's relationship to his material. This ambivalence arises out of the juxtaposition between Livermore's stated satirical intentions and the area in which the audience response lies. While Livermore may claim to be holding up a cracked and distorted mirror to Australian society, it seems to me that his audience's mission is to enjoy the shtick and outrageousness as an occasion for celebration. To put it simply if somewhat Australian, audiences find Livermore funny then there is indeed something deeply awry.

Now Livermore can and has said that precisely is the point, they laugh at the

racism and sexism of his characters because he is able to say and do in public things which they believe but wouldn't dare express so extensively, let alone in public. The theory is that having confronted the worst excesses of their intolerance audiences are either purged of these unamiable attitudes or less importantly, they go home and think about them. I wish I could believe this, but it is not that easy. In order for audiences to recognise what they have seen for what it really is, there needs to be a point in each piece where it is thrown back on the audience and the laughter is pulled up with a start of recognition. It is precisely these points of transformation which were either missing outright, or so defused and softened to the point of apocryphalism.

I constantly felt that Livermore, rather than explicitly confronting the audience's attitudes, explicitly colluded with them; he didn't just let them off the hook, he led them round it.

Beryl Wyatt, "the desperately happy housewife" chased in her pink stoned out as the only sketch that irreverently disturbed the audience from the moment. The consensus of domestic violence was established from breaking plates to baby bashing, no one laughed and in this silence there was a palpable shock of recognition. However some of that shock was lost in the next number, Bette Midler's "We had an apartment in the City" which allowed us to wallow in the uncontroversial acceptability of thinking that we really ought to be nicer to old people.

The other ballerinas, Vanessa Amalram in tutu and footy socks is a baroque brilliant conception which brings together in the two memorable image the god footballer macho operation, fear of the puny city-dweller, questions of deep rooted phallicism, and the identity of sport and the cultural fringe. Indeed why not "Chook Lake"? But even in this sketch the clarity of intention was overruled and obscured by a risqué image of racism and sexual crudity and, and yet again audiences were placed onto safe ground and the serious issues successfully skirted. Similarly Livermore makes transmutability the premise of his work and at the same time reinforces gender bashing, leaving the audience to realise the contradiction. I only wish I could believe they did.

Son Of Betty is predicated on the myth that entertainment is politically neutral and value free but this illusion is part and parcel of the ideology that it purveys. Livermore is an immensely popular performer and while it is easy to be seduced by his virtuosity and the triumphal stage effects, it is hardly surprising or unreasonable to wish to deconstruct the illusion and ask what it is all about.



Ray Livermore in *Son Of Betty*.

Not grounded

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

by Garrie Hutchinson

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead by Tom Stoppard. Melbourne Theatre Company. Athenaeum Theatre. To. Opened 26 March.

Director Bruce Myles. Cast: Peter Coonan, Maria Haden-Gilland, Iphigene James-Lewis, Rosencrantz Nick Lathoum, Guildenstern David Cameron. Players: Frederick Pender, Alfred Antonides, Don Sutherland, Peter Foxworth, Warwick Garmier, Peter Horroby, Michael Figg, Peter Sculley, Roger Oakley, Peter James Shaw, Hamlet John Walton, Ophelia Sally Lidd, Claudius Stuart Chivers, Gertrude Jane Jago, Polonius Jonathan Hardy. (Production)

It's not hard to imagine the impact of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* on the English theatre in 1987. Stoppard (in the midst of the *Batles*, *Flowers*, *Dogs*, *Revolution*, *Man-kurt*) like the very impression of a university was manifested. Full of intelligent puns, doctored on philosophy and art, plenty of

real Shakespeare, and an audaciously lateral idea, *Rosencrantz* was the *Soyuzdetfilm* *Pepper* of the stage.

You can imagine the relief after a decade of *Poet*, and years of Osborne that that meant.

Unfortunately for some, and fortunately for Stoppard, once imagined his kind of plays cannot be achieved by anyone else for fear of humourless plagiarism. And the Stoppardian logic is fairly limited too, it's essentially satirical in *R* and *G*. *Travesties*, less so in *Junkies* and certainly like *Dem. Lovers* — inexplicably successful. Perhaps Stoppard himself sees the sum of puns and coincidences traced out. In *Right and Del* he is reduced (or elevated) to attempting a David Williamson.

But *Rosencrantz* is a wonderful creation, chockablock with nasty cracks about the theatre and life, death and art, a backstage comedy fused with a Beckson as comedy and with its surface of verbal sophistication and fluency the subject (as actually, real-time for *R* and *G*) needs an environment that includes the Beckson-like nowhere/everywhere and the propounds where *R* and *G* interact with the

"reality" of the *Tragedians*, and *Hamlet*. The narrative needs to be "real" if the whole edifice is to have a foundation.

Unfortunately Bruce Myles' production has a nondescript, undesigned environment. Another difficulty lies in the performance of David Cameron and Nick Lathoum as *R* and *G*. They look very uncomfortable. In fact they look lost in the vast cosmos of the *Athenaeum*. Rather than being able to create an air of intimate interest in their offbeat story, in what they say, we have a couple of characters who are not grounded in either the world of *R* and *G* or the reality of the theatre space. And without *R* and *G* on top of the play, the rest falls away, becomes dilapidated to follow.

Not that it's the fault of Lathoum and Cameron: it's just that they apparently work best, work terrifically, in smaller, less conventional spaces. No one who saw the Performance Syndicate's *Tempest* will ever forget them, for instance. A large proscenium theatre, and this play, requires skills of a different sort. It's a pity that *Rosencrantz* has to be performed in this space with these actors, rather than somewhere else, closer up.



David Cameron (Rosencrantz) and Nick Lathoum (Guildenstern)

THEATRE/WA

State Rep./Joan Ambrose

Polished and thoroughly enjoyable

NORTHERN DRIFT

By Marget Luke

Northern Drift by and with Henry Livings and Alex Glasgow. Deafkin Theatre. Opened 23 February 1992 (Professional)

Half a dozen one-person (or even two-man) shows, as in the case of *Northern Drift* is too much for a festival. So this low-key, relaxed entertainment didn't get the audiences it deserved. Hidden away in the 10.45 late-night spot was a mistake too: it was both too intelligent and too restrained to appeal to the midnight audience.

Alex Glasgow's voice singing "Dance to your Daddy" was, of course, hamper to devoted TV watchers, but what came as a surprise was its strength and lyrical beauty in straight ballads, and the savage humour it could carry while working so intelligently. This was the strength of Glasgow's performance: fighting the class war with a beguiling boyish smile, whether sending up The Queen or gleefully singing of Sam, the sausage maker, who loved his job, his money and his boss more than his union,

and was appropriately punished by being nailed into sausage meat himself. The songs of love, too, were kept on the idyllic ground, whether warning Molly to keep her hand on her hip/penny or reporting the progress of mainly unsuccessful seductions. Of the more serious offerings the haunting women's song "Close the courthouse door now" was most impressive.

Without depending on a rigid pattern, the two men portrayed alternate items. Henry Livings, whose rather distinguished, bookish appearance seemed at odds both with his North Country voice and the homely working class tales he related, proved a splendid story teller, with a fine sense of timing in his humour and an occasional real gem in his eye. Repeatedly he bridged the apparent gap between kitchen-sink material and abandoned fantasy with wonderful tales, such as the wedding banquet dominated by a pig's head, the golden wedding that turned into a pot-party, or giving gardening advice on using a hippo as a lawnmower.

The material so lovingly collected over the years had its seat in radio, and the obvious polish in the imaginative use of language gives a hint of its origins. At the same time one can't help feeling that radio audiences would have been deprived of one of the joys of the programme, because, understood as they are, Livings and Glasgow are a couple of polished and thoroughly enjoyable performers to watch, as well as to listen to.

Limitations of form

TRAVELLING NORTH JOSEPH CONRAD GOES ASHORE

by Marget Luke

Travelling North by David Williamson. National Theatre Company, Playhouse, Perth WA. Opened March 1992.

Director: Stephen Kern. Designer: Sue Russell. Lighting: Doreen Goh. Stage Manager: George Teague.

Producers: Patrick Sherington, Frank Luke, Wright Helen, Jenny McVean, Stephen Keith Taylor, Jane, Rosemary Rose, Freddy, Maude O'Brien, Rod, Jane, Rodin, Catherine, Joan King, Alexander, Jenny Dark (Professionals).

Joseph Conrad Goes Ashore by David Allan Hale in the West, Perth WA. Opened 27 March 1992.

Director: Roger Meredith. Designer: Willem Swell. Stage Manager: Richard Hartley. Lt Jean Spence, First: Maria Jones, Carl Martin, Captain Joseph Conrad, Sgt, Frank Johnson (Professionals).

The salient points about *Travelling North* have already been adequately recorded in previous issues of *Theatre Australia*: Mick Rodger in his respectful critique of the Sydney production recognised Williamson's growth toward psychological exploration, and the more relaxed approach to humour in the total content of the play. Gurne Hutchinson got carried away with the sociological angle, dismissing with faint praise the multi-class appeal of the play's concerns, and reluctantly admitting some enjoyment, but dismissing it as the Noel Cowardisation of Williamson.

What neither of them made clear was how the productions managed to overcome the limitations of the form: the episodic conversation piece. Did they, like in Stephen Barry's Perth production, have their actors sitting about in chatty little groups of two or three, with the stage business largely devoted to peering and sipping (or gulping) drinks? Did they, between short scenes, slightly dim the lights, so that it was impossible to tell whether it was in fact a scene change or just an actor walking off to another part of the stage, taking the furniture with him? Often it was impossible for the imagination to make the relevant jump in time or place.

There rather unsatisfactory aspects aside, there was much to enjoy. Pat Sherington made a convincingly attractive liberated fiftyish woman embarking on a late romance, though Luke Wright as her seagull-eyed lover was too Father



Alex Glasgow and Henry Livings

Christiansen gruff with dreadfulness when wog. One could believe that he'd once been a communist, but not that he would have a fisting for Muriel or conduct sadomasochisms when unobserved.

The two daughters who related their potential boyfriend running off to the far north were nicely individualised by Jenny McEwan as the hokey, better Helen, whilst the grunter, troubled Sophie was given a vulnerable warmth by Leah Taylor.

On the whole one felt that Williamson's most successful areas are still the landscapes of middle-Australia rather than at middle-age. The anxieties of the daughters compensating for emotionally deprived marriages seemed far-reaching implications, and the suburban preoccupations were still funny, reaching all the way into sub-tropical Queensland paradise in the form of the burlesque-ethere provided by the other neighbour, an enigmatic terror-pornist by Maureen Ogden.

The best lines, and all round the most enjoyable performance, came from James Reardon as the disenchanted, dry-witted Dr Saul Margerson. He is something new in Williamson — a character exhibiting a type of sophistication his Australian characters won't allow.

It is good to see Williamson experimenting with form, but one can't help hoping it's a transitional phase. The deeper concerns buried at an interesting — but rather verbose copping out, responsibilities in human relationships, shifting attitudes during the aging process. The form in which they are presented is too fragmentary though it's like a Chinese mosaic-board — half an hour later you are hungry again.

JOSEPH CONRAD GOES ASHORE

There's a multiple art gallery collage backdrop on the left, a university staff table in the centre, and a tutor's desk and study to the right. Upstage, and above the rest, there's the bridge of a ship.

The central character is Lil 48, from Solford, a mature-age student doing Eng Lit at Adelaide Uni, and haunted by the idea of Joseph Conrad not landing in Australia. She herself clearly signs landing, after a trip that involved picking across three oceans, just because her husband had a dream about Australia and the sea. (He was the only brother with a beard in Solford, and looks exactly like Joseph Conrad.) So while the husband is following his dream up in Darwin, (taking their children along) she follows the dream of the University course, and, more immediately, her fancy (read text) for a charismatic young English lecturer.

Hereticism, an unusual young bitch called Carol, has a dim boyfriend also doing English, but is not interested in the daisy lecturer herself. But she is a

woman scorned, and so, while Lil's enterprise reaches a satisfactory conclusion with the lecturer heavily bedded, there's a nasty plot by the students to conceal an exposure with juicy photographs.

Such is the story. The Joseph Conrad concept is barely relevant, and not well integrated. The occasional appearance of the bearded sea-dog with red-sundering pipe harking out orders is undesirable EEC access do little to give the play depth or perspective, and in any case, if he's Lil's fantasy, how can he appear when she's off stage? The husband, played by the same actor (Frank Johnson) alternates with Conrad, and makes more sense, as he is used to explain and demonstrate the drab marriage of people whose dreams refused to interlock.

There is something half-finished about much of the play which includes a wealth of funny lines. Highlights are the seduction scenes between Joan Sydney's Lil and Martin Josses' Peter (the lecturer), which effortlessly proclaim that one can be fun, something rarely convincingly secured on stage. There's also a brief attempt at contextualising the monologues of four characters into an amusing quartet, and one could have done with more of this.

Maureen Ogden as the student, although believable in her awfulness, signs a little too shrill and campy vulgar to be entirely acceptable, though her timing and the way she radiates lethal selfishness are masterly.

If David Allen's purpose was to entertain and make an audience laugh, he has succeeded. If he hoped to raise the play's significance a notch or two by doing something literary and fairly symbolic round the edges, one might have to say — not quite.

Uneven but strong

ROSES IN DUE SEASON

By Margot Luke

Review of The Secret to Doreen Clarke (Wale) in The Mail Theatre, Lindhurst WA, opened 21 February 1990.

Director: Edna Mervielde. Cast: William David, Lil Joan Sydney, Doreen Maureen Ogden, Dr. Lil Maureen Clarke, Vic Hawkins, Sel, Joan Sydney (Production).

It is refreshing to find a contemporary playwright who has the courage to write melodrama without yielding to the temptation to drink into the safety of the soapbox. Doreen Clarke has set herself a difficult task writing about alcoholism, involves material so saturated with middle-class cliché that the playwright starts

off with a serious disadvantage.

Much of the time Doreen Clarke manages to overcome the problems. Her doomed characters — an alcoholic war-veteran, his long-suffering wife, teenage daughter and slightly older stepdaughters, are presented at the moment of the alcoholic's funeral. It is their reminiscences in vivid flashbacks that relate the circumstances leading to the man's death.

As long as the action revolves around the three women, all is well. The older daughter, Dawn, played by the brilliant Maureen Ogden, with the glaze of a diamond, is not merely an interesting character, but she has a succession of witty or outrageously funny lines that make a playwright sigh only she is shown as a "tough, clever kid" from way back, who has grown a shell of apathy to deal with an impossible world. The mother, Lil, another performance by Joan Sydney, radiating warmth and down-to-earth humanity, while totally recognisable, is not made overly believable by the author. One agrees that there are women exactly like this who stay locked into the misery of beatings, poverty, degradation and sexual humiliation — but the playwright does not really provide new insights into the role of the mother. The younger daughter, played with petty snarls by Lil Hawkins, is sketched in with a stark clarity both her vulnerability and resistance are nicely created. Relationships between the three women, particularly the sisterly squabbles, are well observed and well brought out by Edna Mervielde's production.

The greatest weakness is the figure of Charlie himself. He is crudely drawn, true-to-life with his blustering self-pity and emotional bursts of aggression. One has seen drinks like this, but as a character one play he is a bore as integrated as a generic drunk strapping onto the stage might have been. It seems a pity that Vic Hawkins' method-actor performance had so little solid foundation to work on.

The domestic tensions are built up to a good climax, and stand up as a "well-made play". Then, out of the blue, a new element is introduced. Charlie's last hours in a lonely lodging house with an alcoholically amorous landlady near the fabric of the play apart. At moment length we are shown Joan Sydney in a second role, playing the landlady who is trying to seduce Charlie, who, also, is totally out of season. One had the sneaking suspicion that the secret must have been permitted to reach such length because no-one could bear to waste Joan Sydney's hard-earned performance but it unbalanced the play.

Despite the general unevenness, it held the interest throughout, and one hopes the playwright will go on to write a more controlled piece that will make full use of her considerable gift for comic dialogue.

BOOKS

by John McCullum

Interesting and useful account

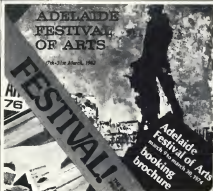
Festival: The Story of the Adelaide Festival of the Arts by Derek Whitlock (published by the author) Rrp \$14.95

To the bighted dwellers on the vicenary, hot, uncultured east coast Adelaide seems a far-off unattainable paradise. We read in books such as Derek Whitlock's *Festival* of a happy place surrounded by benevolent protective hills, in which innocently merry inhabitants pursue their civilised pleasures, watched over by a gentle sun in a dust-egg blue sky. The lot of the Festival-goers crackle like russet leaves that bestrew the grass like dabbles as they cross Elder Park to the Festival Center. In the evening flights of cultural gulls dance over ashble the parklands and "beaconing flocks of swallows fashion their lean flares (almost cannibalistically) on chicken scraps and fallen dinner trays."

The event which has done the most to earn Adelaide the envy and respect of the civilised world, and epithets like "The Athens of the South" and "Florence on the Torrens", is, of course the biennial Festival of the Arts, the elements of which coalesced recently. The first ten Festivals which are covered in *Festival*, saw the local and genuine Cultural Renaissance flower throughout Australia — a Renaissance of which the Festival was an important and energetic part. It has now, thanks Derek Whitlock, got as big as it can get, but with the standard and sanity of even these events which make it to the backblocks of Sydney and Melbourne, not to mention with a budget of \$3.9 million, that seems big enough.

The Festival started, in 1960, as a relatively humble affair, the product of civic pride and a certain business eye for attracting tourists and generating trade. It was not a particularly successful one, nor, apart from the beaters referred to above, place. But the citizens of Adelaide apparently take their culture seriously, and their continuing devoted support, in donations and actual attendance, has been an important part of the Festival's success.

Throughout the '60s the Festival, in spite of high prices seems to have remained essentially provincial without being genuinely provincial. Complaints and delusions of elitism flew back and forth but the overriding concern with Art, with



the high seriousness and pompousity that word often provokes, meant that it was elitist, it remained conventionally, backwardly as rather than the vanguard, as Anthony Scott's claim was later to assume. In 1970 Sir Robert Helpmann boldly and controversially thrust the Festival before the international gaze, by arriving all his friends. In 1972 Louis Van Eyck tried to bring a new community involvement and escape the charge of elitism. But it was Anthony Scott who took hold and directed the Festival along the path for which it has become best known, on the east coast at least.

He acknowledged the strong development made in the previous twelve years and accordingly tried to give the Festival a new, innovative and explorative role. Instead of keeping it as a "cultural festival banger" he argued that it now had a responsibility "jointly to advance public taste" — through a balanced mixture of acknowledged artistic greats and what he called "new and vital influences". There were some people who thought that he attempted to advance their taste was not quite gentle enough, but certainly his years are remembered by us on the east coast as those when we got to see all sorts of exciting companies and performances.

The question of whether overseas

attractions should tour to other cities after the Festival is apparently controversial in Adelaide. I cannot see why. If I could go I would anyway. Certainly the influence of the Festival now extends far beyond Adelaide, and the months after a Festival are exciting times throughout a large part of the country. I even agree with keen anticipation the return of Flower Day, and the time when we can see in Sydney the floral carpets which "traced the splendour of the Arabian Nights".

Festival is not everything one could hope for in a book on the subject. It is a clear blow-by-blow account of the origins and the main attractions at each individual Festival (with quotations from the critics and commentators) which will manage to avoid giving any general overall feeling of the Festival and its import (other than the rather breathless eulogies I quoted from at the beginning). It lacks strong editing, being full of minor errors and misprints. I wonder what George Fauschard would have thought to have *The Recruiting Officer* referred to as a "classical drama".

Nevertheless the book's subject speaks for it, and makes it a continually interesting and useful account of this great reflection of Australian civic and cultural aspirations.

ACT

THEATRE

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)

The Australian National Playwrights' Conference May 4-8

CANBERRA REPERTORY SOCIETY
Theatre Three (47 4222)

Monter and See by Louis Pascal, director,
Ken Boucher. May 14-June 7. Wed Sat
CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)

The Wizard of Oz May 3-10, morning and
afternoon

REID HOUSE THEATRE

WORKSHOP (47 6781)

The Igloo Company: Mr Jack, You Are
playing in secondary schools

Comrades: Theatre Piece, written with
John Rowland

DANCE

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)

The Dances Company: *The Australian*
Ballet Tropic Ball and Grotto. May 31-June
7

OPERA

THE PLAYHOUSE (49 6485)

The Threepenny Opera by Bertolt Brecht,
director, John Tucker. May 1-10

CONCERTS

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)

The Chieftans May 14
Big Band Sound May 22, 23
For another concert, Mike Wilson on
49 5111

NSW

THEATRE

AXIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

(969 8262)

Courthouse Hotel, Taylor Square

Orlando in Oz by Robert and David
Lansberry, directed by Malcolm
Frankley, music by Gary Smith, with Susan
Asquith and Carl Jensen. Throughout
May

Agnesart Hotel, Broadway

Tinsel and Gravel by Rick Muir and
Malcolm Frankley, directed by Malcolm
Frankley, with music by Sandra Ridgwell
Throughout May

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)

Happy Family by Oles Cooper, directed
by Brian Young, with Jill Floyd, John
Clayton, Michael Ross and Hilary
Larkum. Designer, Yoshi Tada.

Throughout May

FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY
(82 1689)

The Builders of Theatre in Dresser Form
by Gary Baxter, directed by Chris Lewis,
with Angela Baines, Anthony Martin and
Gary Baxter. Touring to schools
throughout May

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL NUTSH

THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)

Their Rock a musical revue from the years
of the century to today, with Noel Brophy,
Barbara Wyndon, Garth Meade, Noel
Bryant and Helen Loring, directed by
George Carden. Throughout May

GINGSIAN THEATRE (35 3641)

The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan,
directed by Nargis Freni, with Elizabeth
Lyndon, Lindsay Carr, May Percy and
George Duncan. Until May 3

Wah! Dood! Dood! by Frederik Nori,
directed by Charles Zera. Commences and
May

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)

Some of Jarry, directed by Peter Barry, with
Reg Lister-Jones and the Wellington Boys
band. Commences May 14

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE

COMPANY (22 2328)

Travelling North by David Williamson,
directed by Anne Neume, with Carol Rags,
and Vic Kenney. From May 9

KIRRIEBILL PUB THEATRE (92 1415)

Kurumba Hotel, Milson's Point

The 1944 Show by F P Curney, directed
by Reuben Young, music by Adrian
Morgan, with Danny Atwood, Margo
McCree, Peter Corbett, Ross Hohen and
Laura Gubiani. Until mid May

The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quanton
and Paul Chubb, directed by Perry
Quanton. Opens mid May

LEIC CURRIE PRESENTATIONS

(228 5674)

Calico, a programme of folk songs and
sketches describing colonial Australia,
derived and performed by Colin Douglas
and Tony Sator for infants, primary and
secondary; NSW country throughout
May

Mike Jackson, traditional bush music,
South Coast, from May 26

Agnes: Warrigal Shaper and Styler
(costumes through the centuries) and *A*
History Of Theatre, secondary schools in
Sydney metropolitan, South Coast, and
Hunter. From May 26

Alexandra Moreno, Spanish dancer for
infants and primary; Riverina and West
from May 26

MARIAN STREET THEATRE

(488 3166)

Rain for your Moon, a new Australian
musical based on the book by David
Northam, and music by John Kargnoll
and John McKillop, directed by Alexander
Duncan, with Peter Whifford, Ray de
Farc, Rod Duncan, Stephen Thomas,
Sally Baden and Carmen Tanti.

Throughout May

MADONNETTE THEATRE OF

AUSTRALIA (2 0588)

Drama Theatre, SOH

The Miserable Poetess, directed by
Richard Bradshaw, designed by Norman
Hetherington. May 5-16

MUSIC HALL THEATRE

RESTAURANT (969 8322)

Can Can by Mr. Henry Wood, directed
by Alan Harvey, with Alan Harvey,
Bernadette Hughes, Mal Cannon and
Chantal Carter. Throughout May

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6383)

At the LoLo, a new musical revue with
The Toppens family and Lynne
Duncan. Throughout May

NEW THEATRE (319 3403)

Oh, When A Lovely War, Mary, Joan
Littlewood's musical entertainment
composed with her fellow artists in Theatre
Workshop, London, directed by Frank
Barnes. Throughout May

NIMROD THEATRE (899 5903)

Upstairs: Clouds by Michael Frayn,
directed by Neil Armfield, with Jennifer
Hagen, John McTernan and Paul
Sullivan. Until May 25

Downstairs: Chances, work-
shopped by Geoffrey Rush, with Geoffrey
Rush, Gillian Hyde, Pat Thompson,
Russell Newman and Tony Taylor. Until
May 18

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF

(357 1209)

The "Child" Journey for primary schools
and *Arrows Speed Louder Than Words*
for secondary schools, both directed by Ian
Wilson, with Nola Colden, David
London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and
Rosemary Latta. Metropolitan area
throughout May

PARIS THEATRE (26 5232)

Cirque Or with Andrew Ball, Sue
Broadway, Stephen Champion, Tim
Caldwell, Jack Daniel, John Hawton,
Colin Hawton, Robin Gedge, Pench
Hawton, Robin Lums, Geoff Toff and
Melina Sky. Throughout May

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY

(30 1211)

Children by A R Gurney Ltd, directed by
Graham Correy, with Dush Shannon,
Michael Long, Liddy Holloway and Jane
Harrison. Until May 24

Q THEATRE (042 21 5753)

Messiah for Messiahs by William
Shakespeare, Penrhin from May 2-31

ROGENT THEATRE (235 7946)

Pushington & Co by Michael Bond. May
5-17

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY

(089 23 2632)

The Forth Dog by Mick Rodger, director, Peter Barclay. May 9-24.

Late Night Show. *Goodbye* by Harrie Kevie, May 15-17, 20-24.

THE ROCKS PLAYERS

(060 6254 6203)

153 Gilbey Point Road, Gilbey

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare, directed by Bill Pepper. In repertory with *Trial of Tread Wall* by A.A. Milne, directed by John Dismore. Until May 31.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (092 8532)

York Theatre. *A Star Is Born* by Rodgy Archer and Rodney Fisher, directed by Rodney Fisher, with Rodgy Archer. Until May 31.

Everest Theatre. *More Than A Sweeney Todd*: the life and work of C.J. Dennis, with John Drennon. May 6-17.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR

YOUNG PEOPLE (533 3948)

Five drama workshops on weekend, includes playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. Shopfront Caravan touring country towns and schools with *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare and *Children A and The Tale*. Plus created by the cast and directed by Errol Bray.

Youth Theatre Showcase. *Run and Hide* by Alexander Russo and *The Real Mr J* by Richard Tullock, presented by TOE. Youth Theatre Co. May 2, 3, 9 and 16. *The "Siddi" Jester* by Ian Watson presented by the NSW Theatre of the Deaf. May 16 and 17. *Two New Kids*, teenage cabaret for mature audiences with original songs by Martin Reicher and Errol Bray. May 23, 24, 30 and 31.

SPEAKEASY THEATRE

RESTAURANT (062 7442)

Flax's Showbiz produced and directed by Althea Lane with Garry Gibson, Duane Murray, Peter Noble and Susan Jago. Into May.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

(2 5884)

Drama Theatre, SOH

No Nukes, No Park Drill by Bob Herbert, directed by George Ogilvie, with Mel Gibson and Neel Hazlehurst. Until May 17.

Recording Hall, SOH

I'm Gonna Mr. Ace Together And Taking it On The Road by Greville Croyer and Nancy Ford, directed by Roland Whitmore and Terence Clarke, with Nancy Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Judy Morris and George Spanaki. Until May 24.

THEATRE ROYAL (231 5111)

Plumage Taps by Maury Geron and Ed Feibert, directed by Bill Robertson, with John Inman, Barry Croppon, Johnny Lockwood, Vanessa Ling, Belinda Giblin, Don Sweetnell and Jerry Anderson. Until May 10.

Clove of Plot by Simon Gray, directed by Rodney Fisher, with Ruth Cucknell and

Frank Thring. May 14-May 31

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (2 0540)

Opera Theatre, SOH

Programme II — *Rosencrands* choreographed by Nanyeo after Petipa, music by Glazounov. Until May 3. Programme III — *Ballet Imperial* by Balanchine, music by Tchaikovsky, Threshold by John Butler, and a new work by Graeme Murphy. Commences May 5.

BUSYBODIES DANCE COMPANY

(092 0255)

Downtown Seymour Centre. May 2-10. SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY (2 0568)

Drama Theatre, SOH

Programme I — *Septim & Chloe* by Graeme Murphy to Ravel, *Proton* by Graeme Murphy to Richard Maels, and *Scherzando* by Graeme Murphy. Commences May 23. Programme III — *Waltztime* by Graeme Murphy. Commences May 30.

For further contact. *Circle Long* on 257 1208

QLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (16 2544)

There Goes The Bride by Ray Cooney, director, Andrew McKelvey, designer, James Savage, with Gordon Shaw. May 1-June 7.

Belong Always by Rene Warren, director, Emma Vandenberg. For children. May 24 to August 9.

HER MAJESTY'S (221 2777)

Spider McQueen and Phoenix with Spike Milligan, Carl Yuse and Mike McLean. May 5-17.

Qld Light Opera Company. *Brigadoon* by Lorenz and Lowry, director, David McFarlane, designer, Max Hurley, with Patsy Henegany, John Lidgwood and David Clendinning. Qld Theatre Orchestra conducted by Brian Stanley. May 23-June 7.

LA BOITE THEATRE (16 3622)

Angel C'm by Sam Sheppard, director, designer, David Bell. To May 10.

The Man From Muckinup by Dorothy Hewitt, director, designer, Graeme Johnston. May 20-June 2.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

COMPANY (221 5177)

SOHO Theatre. *Flashes of the Heaven* Warli by John Spang, director, Mick Rodger, designer, Mike Bridges. To May

3.

Richard III by Shakespeare, director, Alan Edwards, designer, Graham McLean, with John Krummel. May 23-June 14. TN COMPANY (52 5880)

Twelfth Night Theatre. *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, director, John Mibson, designer, Beverly Hill. To May 10.

Brisbane Community Arts Centre. *Sweeney Todd* by R.D. MacDonald, director, John Mibson. May 14-June 7. TOOWOOMBA ARTS THEATRE (30 3300)

La Boite. *Johns Center* by David Addenbenke, designer, Jack Ballantine, with Ken Inman, Murray Foy and Robert Kellon. May 12-17.

DANCE

AUSTRALIAN YOUTH BALLET

(52 7622)

Twelfth Night Theatre. *Grande Tarentelle, La Feryand The Rehearsal*, choreographed by Ivana Fialta. May 14-17, and 24. QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (220 3335)

SOHO Theatre. *Carmen*, choreography by Harold Collins, music, Burt, arranged by Ronald Hammer, designer, Mike Bridges and Jennifer Camelson.

QUEENSLAND MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY

Twelfth Night Theatre (52 7622)

Programme of modern works choreographed by Ben Neven. May 19-21.

For further contact. *Don Bachelder* on 238 9311

SA

THEATRE

ADELAIDE REPERTORY THEATRE 13 Angus Street. *Struggle Around* by Eliazer Wazanski, director, Judy Moss. May 26-31. 3pm.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY

THEATRE (223 6600)

Theatre 42. Almost Four Seasons 1988. Four new Australian plays including *Frankie Out* by Mick Barnes and *Grandpapa's Revenge* by Hardy Snow. May 7-31.

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 4121)

Evil by Tim Riss and Andrew Lloyd Webber, director, Harold Prince, with Jennifer Murphy. Throughout May.

Q THEATRE

89 Halifax Street. *Separate Tables* by Terence Rattigan, director, Trevor

Johnston May 3-31
STAGE COMPANY
 Price Theatre, 97 Grosvenor Street, Rodin by James Saunders, director, Brian Dehagan April 28-May 10.
STATE THEATRE COMPANY

(31 3551)
 Playhouse: *The One Day of the Year* by Alan Seymour, director, Kevin Palmer, designer, Axel Baris May 1-10.
Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov, director, Colin George, assistant director, Kevin Palmer, designer Hugh Coleman May 16-31.

THEATRE GUILD
 Acting Company, Unley Town Hall Theatre

Smile Smile Smile, dramatised version of the war facts, director, Jane Barnes To May 8

Serve, rock musical including school people, director, Jim Yule May 21-31

TROUPE
 at the Red Shed

Barbarian (a Truog) by Brian Krick, director, Keith Galsbach To May 17

OPERA

STATE OPERA (352 3788)
 Opera Theatre

L'Oresteia by Dadaïti, conductor Freeman, director, Anthony Beck, designer, John Stoddart May 1-17

CONCERTS

MUSICA VIVA
 Adelaide Town Hall, Beaux Arts Trio playing, Beethoven, Shostakovich and Schubert May 26

For intras contact *Editorial Staff* on 224 4470

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY (34 8003)

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead by Tom Stoppard, director, Lisa Warrington, in rehearsal for June Director, Don Gay, working with Bryan Leslie Theatre

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY (33 5298)

Out At Sea by Mennick, director, Barbara Manning, *Mousetrap* by the Company

Belgrade Theatre Co., director, Greg Sheers, *Man Friday* by Adnan Mitchell, director, Greg Sheers. Touring King Island, NW Coast and Hobart area throughout May

TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23 7998)

Performing Puppet Company of Australia Hobart and Launceston during school holidays, then touring schools for their work. Following this season the company goes into liquidation.

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)
Flowers by Roger Hall, director, Don McKay May 1-3

Old Nick University Revue May 9-14
 State Theatre Company of SA: *The One Day of the Year* by Alan Seymour, director, Kevin Palmer, designer, Axel Baris May 29-31

For events contact the *Editorial Office* on 6649 67 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (242 2020)
 Monash University, Clayton. The Alexander Theatre presents a regularly changing programme of live entertainment

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (247 7123)

Manson — The Defense Testimony by Balmain Theatre Company April 1-19, Tue-Sun

Coming April 30, the inaugural production of the APG Ensemble, *The Two — Heated Calf* by Polish theatre of Civiety exponent, Ignacy Wilkiewicz.

COMEDY CAFE (Bramwich St Fitzroy) Original Comedy entertainment starring Red Quinlan

HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63 7643)

Playbox Downtown: *Cowboys* by Trevor Griffiths, directed by Malcolm Robertson, designed by Sandra Macleod, with Rod Tinsell and William Zappa April 11-May 5

Playbox Upstairs: *Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World* by David Allen, directed by Murray Copland, designed by Jennie Tate March 27-April 26

Coming — *A Manual of French Warfare* by Clem Gorman, directed by Roger Palmer

HSC at the Playbox *The Greatest Man on Earth*, a dramatic collage of the life and works of Henrik Ibsen, compiled and directed by Murray Copland April 23-May 6

HER MAJESTY'S (663 3211)

Son Of A Serv, devised by and starring Roy Lovmore, director, Peter Barry, with the Wellington Street band

THE LAST LAUGHT THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6238)

The Whistler With The Lot, each Easter Sat followed by imported *Brass Band* *Exotica* composed by the inimitable Jane Kilian

Upstairs at 8pm nightly Jennie Lewis in *Lean For You*

LA MANA THEATRE
 205 Farsley St, Carlton, Bookings 347 6003

The Banana Bread, written and directed by Barry Daniels, native writer-in-residence, premiere season April 3-27, Thurs-Sun 8.30

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4000)

Russell Street *Big River* by Alex Buzo, directed by John Sumner, designed by Anne France, with Sandy Gore April 2-May 31

Athenian Theatre *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, directed by Bruce Myke, designed by Peter Corrigan, music by Helen Gifford March 26-April 26

Athenian Upstairs *As We Are* by Beverly Dunn, devised and performed by Beverly Dunn, directed by Don Mackay. A solo performance based on the work of historical and contemporary Australian writers March 31-April 26

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (419 3777)
 Carlton by John Romani, starring Bruce Spence, from a sabbat season at the Frank Pastory for twelve extra performances April 23-May 4, Tues-Sat, 8.30 and Sun 3.30

COMMUNITY THEATRE
ACTORS' THEATRE (426 1620)

Guard The Cowards Dragon Sat production for children

ARENA CHILDREN'S THEATRE (24 9647)

Secondary Schools programme *The Whale — The Biggest Thing That Ever* *Dead* by Ken Kesey and Salimata Co

The Private Ear by Peter Shaffer

CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE (377 4054)

Who What Where and When? *Ango* *Jumbo* and *It's Only A Bit Of Green Glass*, creative involvement plays for children, touring to schools

HILL COMMUNITY THEATRE PROJECT (552 22 218)

Hill Theatre, Parkington St, Geelong Activities and entertainment every Thursday evening

MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES
 Basin Theatre Group (762 1082)

Clayton Theatre Group (878 1762)

Hendyburg Ray (49 2262)

Malvern Theatre Co (211 6920)

Pumpkin Theatre (42 8257)

Williamstown Little Theatre (328 4267)
1813 Theatre (976 8662)

DANCE

THE OPEN STAGE (347 7365)
Melbourne State College, 757 Swanton
Street, Carlton
Chandrabhaga and the Murugappa
Company of Indian Classical Dance April
12-18, Mon-Sat 8pm
For further contact *Succor Spenser* on
476 6320

WA THEATRE

HOLE IN THE WALL (361 3804)
Programme to be announced
NATIONAL THEATRE (325 1500)
The Taming of the Shrew by Shakespeare,
director, James McNee To May 10
Prof by Pam Gera, director, Stephen
Brett Australian premiere
LEGAL THEATRE (381 5577)
The Battle of a Simple Man, director,
John Mansford May 1-24
WA ARTS COUNCIL
Touring programme: *While The Bell*, both
with Leonard Teale To May 11

DANCE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (335 6188)
WA Ballet Company in Gala opening
of the theatre: Four ballets: *Spirits* by Barry
Moreland, *The Plumber* by Garth Welch,
We Are Together by Don Aslett, *Concerto*
Grazie by Charles Corra, artistic director,
Garth Welch May 29-31, June 3-4.

CONCERTS

PERTH CONCERT HALL (325 1399)
WA Arts Orchestral Series/Concerts
May 10
ABC Concerts: Second Subscription
Concert conducted by Piero Gasiba with
soloist Susan Kester May 2, 3
First Senior Concerts, Conductor Piero
Gasiba with Susan Kester May 6
Third Subscription Concert conducted by
David Mizrahi with Vera Benfield May
30-31
For further contact Joan Ambrose on
299 6618



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Duke Ellington



THEMPSA S PRIZE CROSSWORD
No. 23

Name

Address

Across

- Set up an establishment, worth noting (10)
- Find one riled on a charge and got something
for nothing (4)
- Pinkies dipping into the brown with a sort of
copper too (10)
- Golf score makes an HQ in a den of
iniquity (4)
- Is another blessed with more ready money? (7)
- Strange morris to chew over (6)
- Survivor of the big men become, with a note
of humour, a healer (6)

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Australia.

- International supporter rallies round state
without reservations (12)
- Save fifty-nine, then push on (4-2)
- Collection of rough flowers? (6)
- A degree for little Johnny in the
hottest? It's not exactly child's play! (7)
- It's one as love (4)
- Tears again, the underworld's firmness (10)
- Jocular exclamations found back in the red
light district (4)
- 'It was an ... And on her father's
she played' (Coleridge) (10)

Down:

- Grabs a sucker between the pillars (4)
- Take it in the fess (4)
- Poor harvest can nevertheless afford
entertain (6)
- A 12. The half-breed's novel character?
(10, 2, 5, 10)
- Traded unfairly, then scuppered (6)
- Copper kang enhances the flavour (10)
- 'One step above the sublime makes the ...'
(Thomas Paine) (10)
- See 3
- Prepossessing what part of 7 might do we
leave (7)
- Do in manual - it's full of delay (10)
- Discover Dad and the Omelette girl under a
layer of age (6)
- Spirit confined fit over the States (6)
- Overweight from taking out to the jump (4)
- Common, smaller as I am able to be (4)

Last month's answers:

The final correct entry
drawn on May 15 will
receive one year's free
subscription to *Theatre*
Australia.
The winner of last
month's crossword was
T. A. Jones, of Berwick
Victoria.

